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AUTHOR Falcon, Adrienne; Rode, Peter
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ABSTRACT

This report examines the contributions, work experiences, dreams, living conditions, and fears of Hispanic immigrants living in Minnesota and shows how the state of Minnesota can be more welcoming and supportive of new immigrants through changes in laws, public policies, and attitudes. Information is presented based on interviews with 222 adults and 38 children. Findings include data showing that most (69 percent of this group) of the immigrants came to the United States to find work to support their families, most of which had one or more children. The study also reveals that immigrants pay more taxes than most Minnesotans, yet most of the jobs were low-paying service sector jobs; immigrants worry about being picked up by the immigration police and being deported; and immigrants have mental stresses stemming from loneliness and separation in addition to marital tension. To avoid detection, immigrant families seek a self-imposed anonymity that ultimately denies them the services available to others in the community, including educational opportunities. Most immigrants want to learn English so they can improve their employment status, become legalized, and share in the American dream. Recommendations for state consideration are provided that are designed to eliminate barriers to employment, education, and community services. An appendix looks at specific concerns expressed by immigrant children. Suggested readings are included. (GLR)

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ED 366 705

hidden Dreams

New hidden Lives

Hispanic Immigrants in Minnesota

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Written by:
Adrienne Falcón and Peter Rode

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Nothing would have been possible without the participation of the 14 people who served as interviewers and the 260 adults and children who agreed to be interviewed. Normally we could name the interviewers as we thank them, but in this case we cannot. Some were undocumented, and we do not want to put these people at risk. We thank them for working many hours to find and build trust with the immigrants they would interview. They were among the first to believe that something would come of this project.

The interviewers did not have an easy task. Some people chose not to participate, for fear or other reasons. Therefore, to all the women, men and children who agreed to speak, we give our thanks. These people have shared the journeys which brought them here and the struggles, successes and dreams of being an immigrant. Even when people agreed to participate, the fear did not go away. On some occasions, interviewers had to make two or three trips to complete an interview. At times, they met people in the parks or at restaurants, or brought them to their homes. Some of the interviewers became afraid too as they spoke with people, but they persisted. We hope that the report can help bring about some of the changes that interviewers and immigrants talked and dreamed about.

We would like to thank all of those who helped to create the project through many hours of meetings and discussions. Members of the Immigration Study Steering Committee contributed technical assistance, questions, advice and support throughout the 18 months needed to plan and complete the study. They include Eustolio Benavides and Carlos Mariani-Rosa as co-chairs; Victoria Amaris, Charles Buckman-Ellis, Raul De Anda, Lynne Dolan, Karen Ellingson, Adrienne Falcon, Beatriz Garces, Elisabet Lombardich, Juan Rangel, Peter Rode, Gloria Rosario, Maren Swensen and Ixia Velez. Many others contributed advice at one point or another, and we appreciate their contributions as well.

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One of the people who participated in this study was forced to leave her job and the country because of her activities on behalf of new immigrants. She too shall remain nameless, but to her we dedicate this report, which tells of her life and the lives of many others.

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Executive Summary

New Hispanic immigrants encounter many of the same challenges and hardships as other immigrant and low-income groups, with one major difference -- legal status. Most recent Mexican and Latin American immigrants to the U.S. first came here as "undocumented" people, meaning that they don't have legal papers to live and work here. Many who now have legal status also spent many years as undocumented people before becoming legalized. The experience of being undocumented touches all areas of one's life and is one of the defining elements of Hispanic life in the U.S.

Purpose

Public attitudes and public policy toward Hispanic immigrants are based on misinformation and grossly distorted stereotypes. This report was done to:

- discuss the many contributions which new Hispanic immigrants are making in Minnesota and the many obstacles which they must deal with;
- provide more accurate information about the dreams, work experiences, living conditions, and fears of new immigrants and what they need to improve their lives;
- show how Minnesota can be more welcoming and supportive of new immigrants through changes in laws, public policies and attitudes;
- suggest why and how Minnesota can participate effectively in efforts to reform federal immigration law.

This study focuses on two groups: (1) undocumented immigrants, who are here without legal permission, and (2) newly-legalized immigrants, a group which includes people who were once undocumented but have obtained some kind of legal status.

Size

The most frequent estimates about the combined size of the undocumented and newly-legalized immigrant population range from 3,000 to 10,000. Some community activists gave estimates that were either below or above this range. It is known that 1,500 Hispanic immigrants in Minnesota applied for legal status through the amnesty programs of the late 1980's, but there is no good method for estimating the number of undocumented people.

Method and Sample

Information for this study was gathered through interviews with 222 adults and 38 children. Trust and empathy were absolutely necessary if the study was to be successful. Therefore, all of the interviewers were themselves immigrants, and some were undocumented. Of the 222 adults who were interviewed for this study:

- 60 percent were currently undocumented, while 40 percent had legal status, primarily through the amnesty programs;
- 72.5 percent were living in the Twin Cities area, primarily in St. Paul, and 27.5 percent were living in Greater Minnesota;
- Just over two-thirds (68%) were originally from Mexico, 10 percent were from Guatemala and 5 percent were from El Salvador. The remaining 17 percent came from thirteen other countries.
- Just over half (53%) were women and 47 percent were men.

Findings

Families

1. Most of the immigrants interviewed for this study had children. Sixty-four percent had one or more children and 59 percent had at least one child under the age of 18.

2. Many immigrants are separated from their children. Twenty-eight percent of immigrants who had children under the age of 18 were separated from all or some of their children. Usually the children were in their home country. These separations were very painful. About half of the immigrants who were separated from their children were women.

3. More than one-fourth (29%) of immigrants raising children in Minnesota were single parents, nearly all of whom were separated, divorced or never married women.

Recent Arrivals

4. The majority of immigrants first came to the U.S. after employer sanctions went into effect. Employer sanctions, passed by Congress in 1986, were intended to halt unauthorized immigration by penalizing employers hiring undocumented people.

   - Fifty-three percent of the immigrants who were interviewed first came to the United States less than five years ago. Among undocumented immigrants, 73 percent came less than five years ago.
   - Fifty-nine percent of those who were interviewed — and 72 percent of undocumented people — first came to Minnesota within the past two years.

Why They Came to the U.S.

5. The majority of immigrants (69%) said that they came to the U.S. to find work, earn more money and support their families. They spoke often of poverty and lack of opportunity in their home countries, and sometimes of hunger and deprivation. Living standards have fallen sharply in Mexico (where the minimum wage is $3.90 per day), Guatemala, El Salvador and other countries.

   Others came to the U.S.:
   - to escape from civil war and violent repression (primarily in Guatemala and El Salvador);
   - to be re-united with family members who were already here;
   - to get an education, learn English, or get a better education for their children;
   - to escape an abusive or violent spouse or partner;
   - to escape other difficult personal situations;
   - to explore the U.S., to have adventures and to learn about this country firsthand.

Work

6. Nearly two-thirds of the immigrants (63%) were employed at the time of the interview, and 80 percent were either currently employed or had been employed at some time in the past year. Undocumented people were just as likely to be working as legal immigrants.

7. Most of those who were not working were either women staying at home to care for children or unemployed men and women who had been in Minnesota for less than six months and had not yet found work.

8. Most of the jobs held by new immigrants were in low-paying service sector industries, such as cleaning, and in meat-packing and food processing factories. The median wage was $5.75 per hour.

9. Immigrants generally pay higher taxes than most Minnesotans. They pay property taxes through their rent and sales taxes through their purchases, as well as social security and income taxes. However, they generally do not apply for property tax refunds or income tax refunds. Eighty-six percent had income and social security taxes deducted from their paychecks, but only 41 percent — and only 22 percent of undocumented workers — filed income tax returns.

10. In economic terms, the people interviewed for this study are giving more to society than they are drawing from it. Their productive work, their expenditures within the local economy, and their heavy tax burden suggest that they are making valuable contributions to the community.

11. Two of every five workers (39%) answered "yes" when asked if they had been treated differently on the job because they were undocumented or were Hispanic. The most common forms of discrimination and mistreatment were name-calling and insults and always being given the dirtiest and most difficult jobs.

12. One of every six workers (16%) had been hurt or injured on the job. In Greater Minnesota, 22 percent of those now working said they had been injured on the job.

The Emotional Side of Immigration

13. One of the most common and powerful emotions discussed by immigrants was fear of "la migra," the immigration police.

    - For many people, the fear was pervasive; it was "always" there. Immigrants feared that their dreams would be shattered, that it would be very hard to cross the border again, and that all of their past sacrifices would be for nothing. Some feared the violence in their own countries. Others were very afraid that if caught and deported their children would be torn away or separated from them.

14. Fear of being caught or deported often discouraged immigrants from taking part in the normal life of the community and exercising basic human rights. Because of fear, many immigrants:

    - did not report labor law violations or discrimination at work;
    - did not report crimes to the police, including violent crimes such as assault, robbery and rape;
    - did not visit schools, talk with teachers or advocate for their child at school;
    - did not seek medical care or social services that they needed.

15. Other emotional burdens cited by immigrants include:

    - separation from parents, children and other loved ones;
    - loneliness and loss;
    - sadness and desperation over how hard life can be in the U.S.;
    - greater family and marital tension stemming from coming to the U.S.;
    - worries that their children will fall prey to drugs or gangs, or won't appreciate their parent's culture nor understand why they have come here;

Dreams

16. Despite difficulties and disillusionment with living in the U.S., many immigrants felt that life has become better for them or have hope that this will happen. Almost everyone can articulate specific dreams. In no particular order, the dreams which are mentioned again and again are:

    - learning English
    - getting a better job and making more money
    - becoming a legal resident or getting legal papers for one's spouse or children
    - seeing their children get a good education and start a good career
    - owning their own home
    - being re-united with parents, spouse, children and other loved ones

Language

17. Most immigrants felt their English inadequate, and desire to improve one's English was universal. Ninety-nine percent thought it was important for them to improve their English, but only 50 percent — and just 41 percent of undocumented immigrants — have been able to take any kind of English classes.

18. Nearly everyone (93%) agreed that it would be better if more places had translators who spoke Spanish. The greatest demand for translators was in:

- hospitals, clinics and doctors' offices
- supermarkets and discount stores
- government offices, such as the drivers license offices

Major Service Needs

19. Three responses stand out when immigrants were asked to indicate what activities or services would most improve their lives in Minnesota:

    - Taking classes or programs to improve one's English, indicated by 70 percent of those interviewed;
    - Help finding a job or obtaining a better job, cited by 68 percent of those interviewed;
    - Help with immigration law in order to obtain legal status, comply with amnesty procedures, or obtain legal status for spouses, children or other family members. Sixty-three percent of the total sample — and 74 percent of undocumented immigrants — wanted help with immigration law.

Recommendations

Based on these findings and on discussions by the project steering committee, this report makes the following recommendations:

1. State, county and city governments in Minnesota should not spend their time and resources tracking down or reporting immigrants to the federal government. That job belongs to the INS alone. State, county and city governments should become "safe" places where immigrants feel free to seek information, report crimes, and participate in the life of the community.
2. Government agencies, social service agencies, and private organizations should adopt intake and information policies that prohibit asking for social security numbers, proof of legal status and similar intrusive data unless absolutely necessary.
    - Information about their rights and responsibilities as employees, tenants, and students and about basic human rights should be made available to immigrants.
3. Barriers to participation in English classes — such as "lack of time," lack of money, transportation, child care, high turnover among teachers — should be investigated and removed.
    - Interpreting services should be available in many kinds of offices, most notably in hospitals, clinics and medical offices; supermarkets and discount stores; government agencies such as the license bureau; schools, workplaces, courts, and job-placing agencies.
4. New and expanded services should be developed to:
    - create greater economic opportunity through cooperatives and self-employment;
    - provide assistance with immigration law problems, particularly outside the Twin Cities area;
    - establish support groups and train more bi-lingual counselors and para-professionals to meet the need for mental health services generated by fear, separation, stress, and cultural adjustment.
5. The "employer sanctions" provision of federal immigration law should be repealed. Employer sanctions have failed to deter unauthorized immigration and have led to widespread job discrimination against Hispanics, Asians, and others with "foreign" appearance or accent, regardless of whether they are here legally or not.
    - Federal immigration policy should be changed to eliminate bias. Mexicans and Latin Americans should have just as much chance to immigrate legally as residents of any other country.

Prologue

Beginning in 1492, Europeans arrived to settle and conquer the Americas. The Indian nations of North and South America did not "authorize" Europeans to settle and take control of this land. No advance permission was obtained. By the standards of modern immigration law, European settlers were themselves "undocumented immigrants." Their migration to America eventually overwhelmed the Indian nations, primarily through war and the spreading of new diseases. Sometimes Indian nations voluntarily allowed Europeans to use certain lands. Treaties regarding lands were sometimes signed, often under duress and threat of force, and were then disregarded.

Once European settlers gained control of what is now the United States, they claimed the right to decide matters of citizenship and legal residence. Eventually, the government established by European settlers decided to impose tight restrictions on further immigration to this land, thus giving birth to the term "undocumented immigrants," or, more ominously, "illegal aliens."

The first restrictions and exclusions were enacted in the late 1800's against Chinese and other Asian peoples. After World War I, tight quotas were placed on immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. Later, restrictions were imposed to limit immigration from Latin America and other Third World areas.

Ironically, most Hispanics in the U.S. live in territory that once "belonged" to Mexico. After gaining its independence in 1821, Mexico was a very large country which included California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah and part of Colorado. White settlers moved into Texas, fought for independence from Mexico and then joined the U.S. in 1845. The U.S. went to war with Mexico in 1846 to take the rest of these territories for itself.

Immigration policy has been heavily influenced by the demand of agricultural and manufacturing industries, particularly the California agricultural industry, for steady sources of cheap labor. At times, the gates have been thrown open for immigrants. At other times, such as during the Great Depression, the authorities have moved swiftly to deport hundreds of thousands of immigrants.

1. Introduction

"My ideas about what it would be like to live in the U.S. have changed a lot because it is hard to live here. There is a lot of repression when you are illegal. You always live hiding yourself. You don't have the freedom to walk with tranquility." — an immigrant from Mexico

"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself." — Leviticus 19.33-34

Immigration changes both parties — those who leave their home country for another land and those in the new country who receive them. This report is about immigrants from Mexico, Central America and South America who have come to Minnesota. Their lives are journeys of change, filled with work and sacrifice, learning and accomplishment, danger and disappointment. Their arrival raises questions for people already here, both within and outside the Hispanic community: Why have they come? What are their dreams? What can we learn from them? How can we welcome and support them?

This group of people must deal with many of the same challenges and hardships that other immigrant and low-income groups encounter every day, with one major difference — ***legal status***. Most recent Mexican and Latin American immigrants to the United States came here as "undocumented" people, meaning that they don't have legal papers to live and work here. Furthermore, many Hispanic immigrants who now have legal status spent many years as undocumented persons before becoming legalized. Being here without legal papers affects all areas of one's life — work, school, relationships, health and emotional well-being. The experience of being undocumented, shared by many in the community at one time or another, is one of the major elements shaping Hispanic life in this country.

U.S. immigration policy has very clear biases. As a rule, it encourages immigration by professional, wealthy or highly-skilled people or people fleeing from Communist-controlled countries.[1] On the other hand, it strongly discourages immigration by the common people from poor countries or people fleeing from oppressive governments supported by the U.S. Economic crisis and civil war have become so intense in Mexico and Central America that thousands of people have tried to come here as a matter of survival in the past decade. Yet, U.S. immigration law makes it impossible for most of these people to enter legally.

Why the Study Was Done

Due to federal law, many Hispanic immigrants have had to live hidden lives. When that happens to people, accurate information about them is also driven underground. Public attitudes and public policy about immigration are based on misinformation and grossly distorted stereotypes. This report was written to provide an accurate picture that dispels misleading stereotypes. It was created mostly by immigrants who agreed to talk about their lives here. Their voices and experiences are important for the following reasons:

1. Hispanic immigrants by and large are strong people who have endured much to be here and are already making contributions to the state. Yet, they are a largely invisible community which is not being allowed full participation in the life of our emerging multicultural society. This report discusses the contributions they are making and the obstacles they encounter.
2. The experiences of new immigrants here can teach us much about how Minnesota includes and excludes people. This report shows how we can be more welcoming and support-

ive of new immigrants through changes in laws, public policies and attitudes.

3. The experiences of these people tell us much about what is wrong with U.S. immigration policy, and why recent immigration policies have failed so badly. Perhaps people in Minnesota have felt that immigration was an irrelevant and far away concern that could be safely ignored — an issue for the southern border states but not for the northern heartland. This report shows why Minnesota should participate in the national debate and how it can do so.

4. Understanding why people come to the U.S. forces us to look more closely at how U.S. economic, political and military policies affect conditions in Latin America. We cannot ignore the fact that for many decades the U.S. has had an enormous influence over events in Latin America, often pursuing policies that have forced millions of people to leave their home countries and seek a better life elsewhere.

Focus of the Study

This study describes the experiences of two groups, which make up the majority of recent Hispanic immigrants to the U.S. and Minnesota:

- undocumented immigrants — those who are here without legal status; and
- newly-legalized immigrants — this group includes people who were *once* undocumented but now have obtained some kind of legal status, primarily through the amnesty program passed by Congress in 1986.

Newly Legalized and Undocumented People in the U.S.

The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act provided two programs by which undocumented immigrants could apply for "amnesty," which would enable them to obtain temporary legal status and start on the road to becoming permanent legal residents. Between May 1, 1987 and May 1, 1988, over 1.7 million undocumented people applied for the "general" amnesty program. This program required people to have resided continuously in the U.S. since at least January 1, 1982. Eighty-eight percent of these applicants were from the Spanish speaking countries of North and South America, 70 percent from Mexico alone.[2]

Over 1.2 million people applied for amnesty under the more lenient Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) program, which required that applicants must have worked for at least 90 days as seasonal agricultural laborers between May, 1985 and May, 1986. Ninety-seven percent of all SAW applicants were from the Spanish-speaking countries of North and South America, and 82 percent were from Mexico alone.

The amnesty programs show that there were at least several million undocumented Hispanic people in the U.S. during the 1980's who stepped forward to apply. Many others did not. Those who came after the January 1, 1982 cutoff date, including hundreds of thousands of people fleeing violence in Guatemala and El Salvador, were not eligible. In addition, many who were here before the cutoff date did not apply because of the high fees charged for each application, because of difficulties obtaining written proof that they were here, because of complex and confusing rules, because they did not know about it, or because they did not trust that the Immigration and Naturalization Service would administer the amnesty program fairly. (The INS also runs the border police and is responsible for deporting undocumented people.)

No one knows how many people have been or are now in the U.S. without legal status. In the mid-1970's, the Commissioner of the INS estimated the number here illegally at 6-8 million and possibly as high as 10-12 million.[3] Using complicated statistical techniques, the Census Bureau estimated that the total undocumented population in 1980 was 3-4 million.[4] Fifty-five percent were thought to be from Mexico and 75 percent were from all of Latin America, including Mexico. The rest were from Europe, Canada, Asia and Africa. Another Census Bureau study estimated that during the early 1980's the undocumented population was increasing by 158,000 to 290,000 per year.[5]

The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, with its amnesty programs and with its penalties on employers who

hire undocumented people, was designed to stop unauthorized immigration. It did not succeed. One government researcher wrote in 1989 that "most responsible independent researchers estimate that between 2.5 and 3 million persons may still remain in an undocumented status in the United States."[6] That estimate is probably conservative. Other studies show that the Immigration Reform and Control Act may have slowed new immigration in the first year or two, but that by 1989, unauthorized immigration was occurring at close to its previous pace.

Newly Legalized and Undocumented People in Minnesota

According to local INS records, 1,078 people applied in Minnesota for the general amnesty program; 640 were from the Spanish speaking countries of North and South America, including 548 from Mexico. Another 886 people applied for amnesty under the SAW program, nearly all of whom are thought to be from Latin America.[7] Altogether, then, about 1,500 Hispanic immigrants applied for amnesty in Minnesota through these two programs. The number of newly legalized people living in Minnesota may be higher now, since some people have moved to Minnesota from other states since applying for amnesty.

There are no good estimates of the number of undocumented people in Minnesota. Nationally, it is thought that the currently undocumented population is higher than the number who were actually legalized in the late 1980's. In addition, there are some signs that immigration into Minnesota is increasing. Therefore, it is likely that Minnesota's current undocumented Hispanic population is considerably higher than the 1,500 who applied for amnesty here.

Seventeen people who work with social service agencies in the Hispanic community were interviewed for this study. Many said they had "no idea" how many undocumented and newly legalized Hispanics were living in Minnesota. Those willing to make an estimate usually put the combined total of undocumented and newly legalized Hispanics at between 3,000 and 10,000. There were a few estimates that were either below and above that range.

These estimates, if they are close to being true, indicate that undocumented and newly legalized immigrants represent an important but relatively small part of the Hispanic community. The 1990 census counted 53,884 Hispanics in Minnesota. The Census Bureau acknowledges that there has been an undercount, but opinions differ as to the severity of the undercount. The Spanish-Speaking Affairs Council, for example, estimates the Hispanic population in Minnesota to be over 70,000.

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2. How the Study Was Done

This project was created by the coming together of two interests —the Hispanic community's concern for new immigrants and the Urban Coalition's desire to do research that involves and is owned by the community from beginning to end. The Coalition started the process by holding discussions with activists from the Hispanic community. After meetings spanning many months, the group agreed that the situation of undocumented and newly legalized Hispanic immigrants should be the top priority for research.

The idea of studying immigration was originally proposed by Sin Fronteras, a project of the Minnesota Council of Churches which provides emergency assistance to immigrants. Because being undocumented has the effect of silencing people, very little research has been done and public debate about immigrants is very misinformed. The Hispanic community and others involved in these discussions decided it was time to bring this issue out into the open.

In making this decision, there was an element of fear as well as enthusiasm and interest. Some wondered if any kind of information or publicity would draw too much attention to Hispanic immigrants, making them an ideal target, a lightning rod, for those looking for convenient scapegoats rather than real solutions to the country's problems. Others feared a backlash against the entire Hispanic community, regardless of citizenship status. Still others wondered if the INS would become more active against Hispanics. These are real concerns, but the consensus was that the research was important and should go ahead.

Steering Committee

The Urban Coalition and Sin Fronteras became partners and formed the Immigration Study Steering Committee. The Committee was drawn primarily, though not exclusively, from the Hispanic community. (Members are named in the Acknowledgements.) Committee members participated in discussions about the questionnaire, the sample, the findings, and the recommendations contained in the report. They helped find and train interviewers and repeatedly discussed how to protect confidentiality during the interview process and in the final report.

Process

Because they are here without legal papers, undocumented immigrants often lead secret lives. They must be very careful. Fear of being caught and deported is for some almost overwhelming. Asking someone to talk freely about their travels and their life here is a serious matter. Even newly legalized people do not always feel that they are completely safe.

It was decided very early in the project that all of the interviewers should be Hispanic immigrants themselves. Some, in fact, were undocumented. It is doubtful that the study could have been done any other way.[8] The interviewers knew what fellow immigrants were dealing with. In addition, interviewers knew other immigrants, and were often able to interview friends, acquaintances and co-workers with whom a relationship of trust and respect already existed. Throughout the project, interviewers also participated in de-briefing meetings in which they talked about the experience of interviewing and shared their insights and reflections about what they heard.

Interviewing began in August, 1991 and was completed in March, 1992. All interviews were conducted and recorded in Spanish. They typically lasted between one and a half and two hours. Those who participated were given $10 in recognition of the time they devoted to the discussion. They also received a packet of written information in Spanish about the legal rights of immigrants and social services. Everyone was promised that their responses would be kept strictly confidential. Names and addresses were not recorded either on the questionnaire or in the project files. Furthermore, any stories that contain the kinds of details that might identify a particular person were not included in this report, no matter how moving or informative.

The Sample

Most of this report is based on inter-

views conducted with 222 adult immigrants. This is the core sample. In addition, shorter and more informal interviews were done with 38 young children and adolescents to learn about their unique perspectives. Results from the youth interviews are highlighted in Appendix A. Discussions were also held with 17 social service and other agencies serving the Hispanic community.

Since the size and location of the immigrant and undocumented population is not known, and since trust and confidentiality are such important issues, there was no attempt to develop random samples of adult and youth immigrants. Instead, the samples were built first by using the networks of each interviewer. Persons being interviewed were asked if they knew of other immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, who might be willing to talk. Referrals from trusted sources were also added to enable the interviewers to expand beyond their personal networks.

Completed questionnaires were monitored to make sure that specific groups of immigrants were adequately represented in the study. The following guidelines were used to monitor the adult sample:

1. More than half of those interviewed should be undocumented persons. This was the primary interest of the community, and also reflects the belief among immigration researchers that undocumented people outnumber those who obtained legal status through recent amnesty programs. As Table 1 shows, 60 percent of the adults interviewed were undocumented.

2. At least one-fourth of the interviews should be done outside the Twin Cities area, to understand the situation of immigrants in Greater Minnesota. Interviews were arranged in several towns in western Minnesota.

3. The sample should reflect the many countries from which immigrants have come in recent years. Most of Minnesota's Hispanic population is originally from Mexico, as are most recent immigrants, but many other countries are represented as well. One way to ensure that the sample would be more representative was to find interviewers who were themselves from different countries and would know other people from their home countries. Nine of the interviewers were in fact from Mexico, while five were from other Central and South American countries. As Table 1 shows, Mexico was the country of origin for two-thirds of the people interviewed. Altogether, sixteen different countries were represented in the study.

Table 1: The Adult Interview Sample

Immigration Status:	Number	Percent
Undocumented	133	59.9%
Legal Status	89	40.1%
Total	*222*	*100.0%*

Current Residence:	Number	Percent
St. Paul & suburbs	107	48.2%
Minneapolis & suburbs	54	24.3%
Greater Minnesota	61	27.5%
Total	*222*	*100.0%*

Country of Origin:	Number	Percent
Mexico	151	68.0%
Guatemala	21	9.5%
El Salvador	12	5.4%
Colombia	10	4.5%
Panama	6	2.7%
Venezuela	4	1.8%
Ecuador	4	1.8%
Costa Rica	3	1.4%
Peru	2	.9%
Nicaragua	2	.9%
Bolivia	2	.9%
Honduras	1	.5%
Dominican Republic	1	.5%
Chile	1	.5%
Guyana	1	.5%
Brazil	1	.5%
Total	*222*	*100.0%*

3. Demographic Background, Family Connections and Legal Status of Immigrants

To begin, we would like to present some basic information describing who these new immigrants are, when they came and what their legal status is. Table 2 provides demographic and background information on the 222 adults who were interviewed for this study, with separate figures for undocumented and legalized immigrants

Men and Women

The common stereotype that the great majority of immigrants are young, unattached men has in fact not been true for many years. Observers have noticed that in recent years the number of women and children coming here has been increasing.

Among the undocumented people interviewed for this study, exactly 50 percent were men and 50 percent were women. This figure seems quite in line with results from studies in other parts of the country. In addition, 58 percent of those with legal status were women, and in the total sample 53 percent were women.*

Age

Seventy percent of those interviewed were between the ages of 18 and 34. (According to the 1990 census, about 55 percent of Hispanic adults throughout Minnesota are between 18 and 34.) The average age was 32 years old. Undocumented people were generally younger, having an average age of 30 years compared to immigrants with legal status who had an average age of 34 years.

Marital Status

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the adults interviewed were currently married and another 8 percent were living with a partner or companero/companera. The rest were unattached. Two of every five (39%) had never been married. Fifteen percent, nearly all of them women, were separated or divorced. More than one-fourth of the women who participated in the study were separated or divorced.

Not all married couples were living together, however. In about one of every five married couples, the spouse was either back in the home country or working or looking for work somewhere else in the U.S. Almost all of the married people not currently living with their spouses were undocumented.

Children

Most of the immigrants interviewed for this study have children, and their experience of moving to and living within another country has been profoundly shaped by their relationship with their families and children. Nearly two-thirds (64%) had children of their own, and 59 percent had at least one child under the age of 18. Immigrants with legal status were more likely to have children than undocumented immigrants. Three of every four legal immigrants (76%) had at least one child under the age of 18 compared to about one of every two undocumented immigrants (47%).

The process of immigration forces some very difficult choices upon families. In order to move about more freely and

** The group of immigrants with legal status who participated in the study probably over-represents women. Due to the high cost of applications and other factors, many families decided that only the husband should apply for amnesty, while the wife and children remained undocumented with the hope of being legalized later. In the nation as a whole, therefore, most amnesty applicants were men. However, in this study, most of the amnesty applicants were women.*

Table 2: Profile of Undocumented and Newly-Legalized Hispanic Immigrants

Gender	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
Male	67	50%	37	42%	104	47%
Female	66	50%	52	58%	118	53%
Total	*133*		*89*		*222*	

Age	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
24 years or less	37	28%	13	15%	50	23%
25-29 years	37	28%	21	24%	58	26%
30-34 years	28	21%	18	20%	46	21%
35-39 years	15	11%	13	15%	28	13%
40-49 years	11	8%	17	19%	28	13%
50 years or older	4	3%	7	8%	11	5%
Total	*132*		*89*		*221*	
Average Age in Years:	30		34		32	

Have Children Under 18?	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
Yes	63	47%	68	76%	131	59%
No	70	53%	21	24%	91	41%
Total	*133*		*89*		*222*	

Where do you live?	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
Twin Cities Metro Area	115	87%	46	52%	161	73%
Greater Minnesota	18	14%	43	48%	61	28%
Total	*133*		*89*		*222*	

Country of Origin:	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
Mexico	83	62%	68	76%	151	68%
Guatemala	18	14%	3	3%	21	10%
El Salvador	2	2%	10	11%	12	5%
Colombia	9	7%	1	1%	10	5%
Panama	4	3%	2	2%	6	3%
Other Countries	17	13%	5	6%	22	10%
Total	*133*		*89*		*222*	

When did you first come to the U.S.?	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
Less than one year ago	23	18%	1	1%	24	11%
1-2 years ago	32	25%	6	7%	38	18%
2-3 years ago	14	11%	5	6%	19	9%
3-5 years ago	24	19%	9	10%	33	15%
5-10 years ago	17	13%	27	31%	44	21%
10-20 years ago	16	13%	28	32%	44	21%
More than 20 years ago	2	2%	11	13%	13	6%
Total	*128*		*87*		*215*	

When did you first come to Minnesota?	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
Less than one year ago	60	47%	21	24%	81	38%
1-2 years ago	32	25%	14	16%	46	22%
2-3 years ago	17	13%	10	12%	27	13%
3-5 years ago	14	11%	21	24%	35	16%
5-10 years ago	5	4%	13	15%	18	8%
10-20 years ago	0	0%	7	8%	7	3%
More than 20 years ago	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	*128*		*86*		*214*	

reduce expenses in the U.S., one person (usually but not always the husband) may come alone while the rest of the family remains behind, perhaps to come later. Other immigrants, usually women who are single parents, leave their children behind to be cared for by the women's parents or other relatives. As Table 3 shows, 37 of the 131 immigrants (28%) who had children under 18 were separated from some or all of those children. About half of the immigrants who were separated from their children are men and half are women.

Table 3: Are Your Children Living Here With You? (Based on families with children under 18)

All children under 18 are living here	94	72%
Some children under 18 are living here; others are living elsewhere	6	5%
All children under 18 are living elsewhere	31	24%
Total	*131*	

These separations are painful and the over-riding goal of most of these parents is to make enough money and become settled to bring their children here too. When asked about her plans for her child back in Mexico, one woman answered, "To earn more money so I can send for him, because I cannot stand to live without him. He is very little and he needs me."

Single Parents

More than one-fourth (29%) of the immigrant households with children here in Minnesota were headed by single parents, either separated, divorced or never married. (Table 4) Nearly all single parents were women.

Table 4: Marital Status of Immigrants Raising Children Under 18 in Minnesota

Separated	12	12%
Divorced	5	5%
Never married	12	12%
Married — Living together	63	63%
Partner/Companero — living together	8	8%
Total	*100*	

Length of Time in the U.S. and Minnesota

More than half of the people we interviewed (53%) first came to the U.S. less than five years ago. Among undocumented immigrants alone, nearly three-fourths (73%) came to the U.S. for the first time less than five years ago.

This time period is significant because it was five years ago that the employer sanctions created by the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act went into effect. The sanctions were designed to halt unauthorized immigration by imposing penalties and fines on businesses hiring undocumented people and by requiring all new workers to show proof of legal status. The intent was to make it impossible for immigrants to find work. Once word got back to Mexico and other countries that there were no jobs, it was thought that people would stop coming to the U.S.

The presence of large numbers of recent arrivals suggests that employer sanctions have failed. Similar observations have been made throughout the country. One national study has found that, three years after the passage of IRCA in 1986, the annual flow of undocumented immigration was nearly back to its earlier level before passage of that law.[9]

If most of the immigrants were fairly new to the U.S., they were *very* new to Minnesota. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of those we interviewed — and 72 percent of undocumented people — first came to Minnesota within the past *two* years. Minnesota is generally not the immediate destination of people entering the U.S. Most of the immigrants had lived in California, Texas, Florida and other states — some for many years — before coming here. This large number of very recent arrivals

Table 5: Immigration Status

Undocumented — without papers	133	60%
Legal Status:		
General Amnesty	29	13%
Special Agricultural Worker Amnesty	19	9%
"Legal Resident"	21	10%
"Permission to Work"	4	2%
"In process" of legalization	6	3%
Temporary Protective Status	6	3%
Political Asylum	4	2%
Total	*222*	

Amnesty

Just over half of those with legal status — and 22 percent of the total sample — had become legal residents through one of the amnesty programs enacted by Congress in 1986. The general amnesty program was open to undocumented people who could prove that they had lived in the U.S. continuously since January 1, 1982. The Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) amnesty program was available to anyone who worked at least 90 days as a seasonal agricultural laborer between May 1985 and May 1986.

"Legal Resident"

Another 10 percent simply described themselves as "legal residents" or "permanent residents" but gave no indication that they had been involved in an amnesty program. They became legalized through some other means, most likely because they were immediate family members of someone who had already become a permanent legal resident or who was a citizen.

"Permission to Work"

Four individuals stated that they "had permission to work" when asked about their immigration status, again giving no indication of involvement in an amnesty program.

"In Process of Legalization"

Six others said that they were "in tramites," in the process of becoming legalized. They have the right to be here while their application is being processed. Most often these people were spouses or immediate family of someone who was a permanent legal resident or a U.S. citizen.

TPS

Six people, all from El Salvador, had received Temporary Protective Status (TPS). Despite massive political violence in El Salvador, the U.S. government has refused to grant political asylum to Salvadoran refugees. After mounting pressure, TPS was finally enacted as a way to give temporary legal status to these refugees. To be eligible, Salvadorans had to be in the U.S. before September 19, 1990 and had to apply by June 30, 1991. TPS was due to expire on June 30, 1992. However, as this report goes to press, the President has ordered that many Salvadorans can stay an additional year under "Delayed Entry Departure" status. Across the nation, about 194,000 people applied for Temporary Protective Status.

Political Asylum

Four people had been granted political asylum or were having their application for asylum reviewed.

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is another indication that Minnesota has experienced an increase in both authorized and undocumented immigration just in the past few years.

Immigration Status

Sixty percent of the immigrants interviewed for this study were undocumented. They were here "sin papeles" (without papers). Most had crossed the border illegally. Others arrived legally with a student visa, a tourist visa, or some other form of permission, but then decided to stay. Once their visa expired, they became undocumented and did not have legal permission to work or live here.

The remaining 40 percent, on the other hand, were in the U.S. legally at the time of the interview. The immigration system is very complicated and there are many categories of legal status. Table 5 describes these categories. It is probably safe to say that almost all of those interviewed who now have legal status were at one time undocumented.

Immigration Status of Families and Children

The immigration status of the person who was interviewed tells only half of the story. For undocumented immigrants who were married or living with someone, over three-fourths (79%) of the spouses or partners were also undocumented. Nearly all (94%) of undocumented immigrants with children had at least one child who was undocumented. Generally, in such families all of the children were undocumented, but in several cases the older children were undocumented while the younger children were U.S. citizens because they had been born here.

Even for immigrants with legal status, there are often situations in which some family members are legalized and others are not. Thus, while someone with legal status may not have to fear that he or she might be deported, they do have to fear for other members of the family. One of every eight (13%) legal immigrants who were married or living with someone had a spouse or partner who was undocumented. One of every four (26%) legal immigrants with children under 18 had at least one child who is undocumented.

4. Why Have They Come?

No one leaves their home country easily. For most recent Hispanic immigrants, coming to the U.S. demanded major sacrifices. Often this meant selling everything they owned or scraping together money from relatives and friends to pay for the journey and perhaps for the services of a "coyote" to help them cross the border. It often meant leaving behind loved ones and living with the pain and worry of separation, and leaving behind one's homeland and culture. In many cases, it meant enduring the danger, violence and humiliation of "the crossing."

Immigrants with whom we spoke had many reasons for taking that step. In recent years, the federal government has tried to discourage and make it even more difficult for undocumented people to come here. Yet, thousands of people have done exactly that. To understand why, we have to recognize the economic, political and military pressures that impel so many people to leave their homeland. Father Gregory Boyle, pastor of the Dolores Mission Church in Los Angeles, put it this way in article for the *Los Angeles Times:*

> *No law, no hiring protocol, no amount of border vigilance, no penalty is a match for what compels these people to come to this country: survival. Abject poverty, political instability, torture and other abuses push thousands across our border. There is not a deterrent imaginable that equals the conditions that force their migration.*

Mexico

Mexico has not, in recent decades, known massive political violence and civil war, although there have been serious acts of repression, such as the killing of hundreds of protesters on the eve of the Mexico City Olympics in 1968 and the "disappearance" of at least 500 people since the 1970's. But Mexico has in the past 10 years experienced a profound economic crisis that has left many people deeply impoverished with few opportunities.

Between 1982 and 1991, the purchasing power of the minimum wage in Mexico dropped by 66 percent after adjusting for inflation. Of course, not all workers earn the minimum wage. However, it is estimated that 10-20 percent of the urban workforce receives the minimum wage or less, and the United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLA) reports that 60 percent of workers in rural areas earn no more than the minimum wage.

In 1987, wage and price controls were enacted. Between 1987 and 1991, the minimum wage rose by 80 percent but the price of basic goods increased by 250 percent. The minimum wage now stands at $3.90 per day.

The Mexican government reports that 41 million people, nearly half the total population, have incomes below the government's official poverty line. Other reports estimate that extreme malnutrition doubled between 1974 and 1989 and that half of all rural children are malnourished. There have also been a sharp decline in the average amount of calories, protein, milk, beef and pork consumed by each person.[10]

Prospects for the foreseeable future are not encouraging. Pressure from international banks as well as the U.S. government encourages an emphasis on production for export rather than for internal use in order to pay off Mexico's massive debt. The government has cut social services and cut assistance to small farmers.

Guatemala

The roots of the current crisis in Guatemala go back at least as far as 1954, when the democratically-elected Arbenz government was overthrown by a CIA-inspired military coup. Since then, Guatemala has experienced waves of military and death squad activity aimed primarily at stifling resistance on the part of the Indian population, which according to some sources makes up 60 percent of the population. The Guatemala Support Network estimates that over 100,000 have been killed, over one million have been displaced from their homes and villages, and 440 indigenous communities have been destroyed. In their place, tens of

"The Crossing"

"Near the border] we were assaulted and they took everything, even the address of the family in the U.S. that we came looking for. They left us without five cents. At the first town in the U.S., we arrived at a house because we were thirsty and later we stayed five days and worked for them. They paid us something and [by walking and taking a bus] we finally arrived in Houston. There we worked about 15 days." (Woman, Guatemala)

"When we were crossing the border, the 'coyote' put a knife to my stomach and said give us everything. If I had known about the crossing I would not have come." (Man, Guatemala)

"I arrived at Tijuana and paid $700 to a 'coyote' so that they would pass me and my children and my wife. Someone else then took me to my uncle's house in Los Angeles. My family and I took the bus here. In Iowa we took the wrong bus and in the terminal I got lost for one day. It was very hard because of not speaking English. The trip was very hard because we got stomach sickness; we almost wanted to cry." (Man, Mexico)

"During the crossing, I and my friend were shot at by some thieves and I was alone in the mountains and continued on the journey." (Man, Guatemala)

"I walked to Phoenix through the desert." (Man, Guatemala)

"I came by bus and by walking a lot. Crossing the river (Rio Grande) was dangerous. (Man, El Salvador)

"We spent six months in Tijuana working to get money. They charged $500 for me and my husband and $250 for each child [two children]. The migra caught the group ahead of us and my son screamed "Mother, run, run!" They didn't catch us. On the bus trip later we were terrified that we would be caught." (Woman, Mexico)

"I followed a group being led by a 'coyote' and came by myself with only luck and made it across. I then spent a year on the border picking strawberries and then living on the streets and begging for money." (Woman, Mexico)

"I left my smallest children in Mexico with my mother and I brought the bigger ones with me. We came to Tijuana. In that time they charged a lot to cross, so my son [who was already in the U.S.] gathered some money so I could cross. I left my other two children in Tijuana a month and then went back for them. I remember that my daughter cried saying to me not to leave her in Tijuana." (Woman, Mexico, Legalized through Amnesty)

"My husband came to bring us [he was already in the U.S.] at Christmas. He brought us to Tijuana where we stayed for two days and tried to cross. We were walking when immigration arrived and put us back. We were in jail all of the morning and at night they let us go out again. I remember that that year there had been a lot of cold and that I was very afraid that my children would get sick, because they were little and with the wetting from the river. The two littlest ones had already gotten sick so that when we arrived in California all had pneumonia." (Woman, Mexico)

"I was pregnant when I came but I lost the baby when I crossed the border. I came with a cousin who helped me. We were crossing the border when my cousin slipped and without wanting to he pushed me as well and we fell hard on some stones. At first I didn't feel bad. We crossed the border without any problem after having walked four hours. A car was waiting for us. By then I was feeling very bad and we arrived at San Diego where I was already quite bloody and with a fever and with horrible pains. In San Diego was where I lost the baby. I was in the hospital alone for two days." (Woman, Mexico)

thousands of people have been forced to move into "model villages" patrolled by the military.

El Salvador

El Salvador is a small, densely populated country where a small number of families controls most of the productive land. The struggle between this small elite and the majority of the population has become extremely violent at times. In the early 1930's, about 30,000 peasants were massacred by the government. Democratic reform has been repeatedly stifled. Since the late 1970's, over 60,000 people, including workers, farmers, priests, human rights workers and others, have been killed by the military and military-related right-wing death squads. Torture has been widespread. An atmosphere of terror prevails. Several guerrilla movements gained in strength during the 1980's as people saw no other alternative to government violence. The civil war has in turn contributed to an even greater economic crisis within the country.

Hundreds of thousands of people have fled Guatemala and El Salvador, some living in refugee camps in Mexico or other countries and many coming to the U.S. Very few immigrating here have been able to obtain political asylum.

Table 6 describes the reasons given by people when they were asked why they came to the U.S. Some people gave more than one reason and these are also listed in the table.

Economic Reasons

For the great majority of Hispanic immigrants, improving their own or their families' economic situation was the overriding concern. When asked why they came, 69 percent talked about finding work, earning more money or supporting their family.

Sometimes that was simply stated as: "I came to find work," or "I came because I wanted to begin a new life and have enough money to support my family." Others described how hard it was to make a living in their home country. When asked why they had come to the U.S., they said:

"In Mexico, there is no work. Well, there is work, but you are not able to earn enough." (Man, Mexico)

"I came because the situation there was very difficult. You cannot get a good job and money for everything is scarce."

"I came because in my country my family was suffering a lot of hunger and I wanted a better life for my children and family. There were weeks where we ate something once a day."

Table 6: Why Did You Come to the U.S.

	Men		Women		Total	
Economic—find work, earn more money, support family, escape poverty	80	77%	74	63%	154	69%
Political repression, civil war	15	14%	6	5%	21	10%
To be with spouse/family	3	3%	34	29%	37	17%
To go to school, to learn English	11	11%	21	18%	32	14%
To explore, to have adventure	7	7%	4	3%	11	5%
To escape an abusive spouse or partner	0	0%	7	6%	7	3%
To escape other personal situations	1	1%	7	6%	8	4%
"New life" or "better life" with no further explanation	4	4%	6	5%	10	5%

Totals add to more than 100% because some people gave more than one reason.

"I came because they told me that here you live better. I was doing badly and there were days when we did not have anything to eat."

"I came because I had been told that here you earn well, and... because the jobs in my country are very hard and there is much exploitation on the part of the factory owners."

"I came to help my family and to be able to have some savings and to be someone in life."

For some women, economic motivation was compounded by the difficulties of surviving as a single parent without support:

"I came to work in order to earn money. The baby's father didn't want to help with any of the expenses and the situation there was very difficult."

"My husband left us much of the time... We didn't have anything even to eat. When the oldest of my children began to grow, he came to the U.S. and was able to send us money... My son and his wife were here and they said it was better."

Another group of people mentioned that they did not have enough money to continue their schooling, so they came to the U.S. to advance themselves. A man from Mexico who had wanted to become an engineer explained:

"I wanted to study in Mexico but I did not have the money to be able to do so. Therefore, I worked in the Maquiladores (low-wage, American-owned factories located in Mexico near the border) but I decided to come as an illegal to earn more money."

Sometimes, economic distress was intertwined with war and violence. For example, a man from Guatemala said:

"I came for the economic situation and the unemployment that there is in my country. It is very difficult to find work because of the government and the guerrillas, which are never in agreement..."

A woman, also from Guatemala, said at first that she came to the U.S. to earn money so that her children back in Guatemala could study. She explained:

"In Guatemala the money does not stretch for the children's studies. It is only enough for food, and in addition one cannot work a lot because sometimes the army is in the streets looking for the guerrillas and one cannot work."

Political Violence & Civil War

While 16 percent of immigrants were from the violence-torn countries of Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, only 10 percent explicitly mentioned political repression and civil war as a reason for coming here. There was some reluctance on the part of people from these countries to talk about the situation there.

One woman from El Salvador said: "The situation there with the war is very difficult. I was very young and I didn't want to die." A man from El Salvador explained his decision this way:

"I came because of the political situation in my country. It was a moment of life or death. My life in El Salvador was in danger and I had to get out... Please don't think that coming here has made me feel good, because I feel [by leaving] like I have betrayed my people but I had to get out. It was life or death."

Another man, also from El Salvador, came to this country seeking political asylum "because I was being looked for in my country."

A woman fled from her country but had to leave behind her 15-year old son, who had been drafted into the Army. She described seeking political asylum unsuccessfully in both Mexico and Canada before coming to the U.S. She has not received asylum here either.

Came To Be With Family

Seventeen percent said that coming to be with family members was a major reason for leaving their home country. Almost all who came for this reason were women. One woman came because her daughter was already living in the U.S. and asked her to come and take care of the children while she worked. Others came to live with their children or other relatives who were in the U.S. One woman explained:

"I came because my sisters and oldest daughters were already here and I felt very alone. My daughter got married to someone from here and she told us that life here was not so hard."

Several women came to be with their husbands who were already here and had

found work and a place for the family to live.

Going to School and/or Learning English

About 14 percent gave education as one of their primary reasons for entering the U.S. Again, the majority of people who gave this reason were women. Occasionally, this response was given by someone who had come with a student visa to go to college and had decided to stay here after the visa expired. Sometimes, it was simply expressed as a desire to learn English. In several cases, parents talked about wanting a better education for their own children. As one person said: "I wanted to have money so my son could study." And another: "I came for education... because of problems with the education system in my country." Another noted the poor education opportunities for rural people in her home country: "I came for the better economy and for a better way of life for my daughter and because of the bad situation in the countryside for studying."

To Explore, To Have Adventure

A few people said that they came in order to explore and learn about this country firsthand. A man from Mexico expressed this desire most clearly when he said:

"I came because I wanted to know. I am a wanderer. I no longer wanted to hear stories. I wanted to know for myself."

To Escape an Abusive Husband or Boyfriend

Several women came to the U.S. to get away from violence in their own homes. The number of people who mentioned this is not large, but their stories are compelling. One woman said:

"I came here because it was far away from my husband. My husband beats me and I wanted another way of life, without fighting."

Another woman spoke of her decision this way:

"I separated myself from my husband, who gave me a life of hell, and more than anything I fled and that's how I came here. In addition, I knew he wouldn't come here because he is in drugs and wouldn't leave the group of people he hangs out with for anything."

A few women who cited the civil war going on in their home countries also talked about abuse:

"I came because of the war. I was escaping from my ex-husband. I am [now] a single mother and I didn't have much future in my country."

"The situation there with the war is very difficult. I was very young and I didn't want to die. For me it was going very badly with my husband. He beat me a lot, and finally I realised he was taking drugs."

To Escape Other Personal Situations

Another group of people, almost exclusively women, mentioned very difficult personal situations as motivations for leaving. These situations included family conflict, social stigma and ostracism. A woman from Guatemala talked about "all the people speaking badly of me because I had a son without being married." A woman from Mexico explained that "I came to earn money and study. I found my husband with another woman. My family would not let me divorce him. I fled from that situation... I came to Minnesota because it was the furthest from Mexico." A gay man talked about his desire to leave an intolerable social situation: "I wanted to go far away where no one would speak badly to my family about my sexual problem. I wanted to go to a place very far away where they would respect you."

Better Life

Finally, five percent of those interviewed simply indicated that they came to find a better life or to start a new life, without explaining further what they meant. It is probably safe to assume that this is primarily an economic motivation, but we did not want to decide that arbitrarily. A "better life" could potentially mean many things. Therefore, Table 6 lists this reason separately.

Why Minnesota?

Two things stand out as reasons why the people we interviewed eventually settled in Minnesota. One was the perception that there were more jobs here. The second was the presence of friends or relatives already in Minnesota who would be able to give them a place to stay and help them get started in finding work.

Relatively few immigrants from Mexico and Latin America come directly to Minnesota when they enter the U.S. The places where they go — California, Texas, Florida, the Sun Belt states — have a reputation as rapidly growing areas where there are plenty of jobs. Many immigrants, however, find that not to be true. One person from Colombia said:

"Everyone told me that in Miami it was better because there were many Latin people there. But, in Miami, there is almost no work, and that is why I came here."

Others had similar experiences:

"I was in Washington but somebody told me that there were more jobs here."

"They say that [in Minnesota] there is a lot of work and where I was in Miami and Houston there was not work."

"In Los Angeles the situation was more difficult for obtaining work"

"They told me that here [Minnesota] you find work and I decided to come because in Texas it was taking a lot of work to find a job. First I was in San Antonio and then I went to Dallas and from Dallas to here."

"Some Hispanics that I met in Oregon told me that this state was good for work."

"We came from Florida but there it is very ugly and there are not many jobs."

Another person came to escape the dangerous kind of work she had experienced elsewhere and to find her health:

"I came here because this is a fresh, clean place where I can live well. In Texas, pesticides fell on my skin and the membrane was burned and my nails fell out. In Texas, they did not give me many years to live, and here I realized that the climate is helping me and I continue to live."

Connections with relatives and friends were also very important in choosing Minnesota as a place to come. About 40 percent of the people we interviewed already had family members in Minnesota when they came here. Others with no family here spoke of "friends", "contacts," or "my cousin's friends" who suggested they move here and helped them get settled. One man from Mexico described his plans in this way:

"I spoke to my uncles who live here [in Minnesota] and they extended a helping hand and that is how I am here. Minnesota is the only place where I have family, and they would help me with my needs."

5. Work

For most immigrants, finding work and earning money is the explicit reason they came to Minnesota. Work is the means to a better life for themselves or their families. Or it is a means to survive in this country while violence rages in their home country.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of all those interviewed for this study were currently employed, and 80 percent were either currently employed or had been employed at some time during the past year. (Table 7) Undocumented people were just as likely to be working as those with legal status.

As Table 8 shows, most of those not currently employed fell into two main groups — "homemakers," and recent arrivals who had been in Minnesota less than six months. Homemakers were women working at home caring for their children but not employed for pay. They accounted for nearly half of those not currently employed. The second group consists of immigrants who had arrived in Minnesota sometime during the past six months and had not yet found work. (Most were undocumented.) They accounted for over one-fourth of all unemployed immigrants.

Kinds of Jobs

Most of the jobs held by immigrants were in the hotel, restaurant, cleaning and other lower-paying service industries. A few were working in offices and a handful were working as professionals. Many of the immigrants, particularly those with legal status living in Greater Minnesota, have found jobs in meat-packing or food processing factories.

Back in their home countries, people had worked in a greater variety of jobs. Very few were farmers or agricultural workers, perhaps indicating that relatively few of the immigrants reaching Minnesota

Table 7: Employment

	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
Employed currently	84	63%	56	63%	140	63%
Unemployed—has worked during past year	16	12%	21	24%	37	17%
Unemployed—no work in past year	33	25%	12	14%	45	20%
Total	*133*		*89*		*222*	

Table 8: Labor Force Status

	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
Employed	84	63%	56	63%	140	63%
Full-time Homemaker—caring for home & kids and not employed	17	13%	20	23%	37	17%
Disabled	1	1%	3	3%	4	2%
Student	0	0%	2	2%	2	1%
Unemployed—has lived in MN less than 6 months	19	14%	4	5%	23	10%
Unemployed—has lived in MN more than 6 months	12	9%	4	5%	16	7%
Total	133		89		222	

are from the rural areas of Mexico and Central America. Some were truck drivers, roofers, mechanics, artisans, and office workers and sales clerks. A few cleaned houses or owned their own small businesses. It seems clear that many people came to this country with some skills and experience in different kinds of work. While they may have jobs here in Minnesota, these may not be jobs that fully utilize the skills and experience that people have brought with them. Asked what she liked or disliked about her work, one woman who was a secretary in her home country replied:

"I have a place for my daughter and good meals and they treat me well. I like everything, except that I believe that still I am not really in the country. I would like to work as a secretary and not as a cleaning lady because this is limiting and I want to have the opportunity to work here legally."

Workers often had complaints about their jobs that might sound familiar to anyone who has done difficult or dangerous or tedious work for low wages. For some the work was very physically demanding: "I don't like it very much because I am always tired. It is difficult and it affects my back because you have to bend over a lot." Another person said "Every night my arms hurt and after a while it is boring."

But many workers also expressed positive feelings about their jobs. They appreciated getting paid (as one man said, "In Mexico sometimes I had to wait until they wanted to pay me. At least here I have my money every other week for sure."), and some expressed satisfaction that they worked hard and were good at their jobs.

Hours, Wages and Taxes

Most of those currently employed in Minnesota are working full-time. About three-fourths (73%) work over 35 hours per work, and nine percent said that they work at least 50 hours each week. The length of time in their current job is quite short; 68 percent have been with their current employer for one year or less. This is due in part to the fact that many immigrants arrived in Minnesota only recently, but it may also suggest that lower-level service industry jobs are not very stable, requiring people to find new jobs often within that sector.

The wages earned by these workers are uniformly low. The median hourly wage was $5.75, which means that half earned more than that amount and half earned less. Pay was slightly higher for some of the meat-packing jobs, although the work was also described as very dangerous and difficult. Only 3 percent of those working reported making at least $10 an hour.

The great majority of workers (85%) were paid by check. The remaining 15 percent who were paid in cash were often women who worked as domestic housekeepers or who provided child care from their own home.

Eighty-six percent said that income and social security taxes were taken out of their paychecks each pay period. But only 41 percent of those who were working — and only 22 percent of undocumented workers — filed income tax returns. Undocumented people believe it is dangerous to file income tax forms because they fear they will be detected and caught. As one man said: "I know I can't do that because I could be caught. I am afraid they will discover me." As a result, they must give up their tax refunds. In particular, they may not be able to receive any help from the Earned Income Tax Credit, which is designed to reduce federal taxes on the working poor.

All immigrants pay property taxes through their rent and sales taxes through their purchases. Nearly all immigrant workers are also paying social security and income taxes; in fact, they are paying considerably more in income taxes than they really owe, due to reluctance to apply for refunds. The latest study from the Minnesota Department of Revenue shows that low-income people pay higher combined property, sales and income taxes than wealthy people, when measured as a percent of income.[11] The overall tax burden on immigrants appears to be even heavier than on low-income people generally.

In economic terms, the people interviewed for this study on the whole are giving more to society than they are drawing from it. Their productive work, their expenditures within the local economy, and their heavy tax burden suggest that they are making valuable contributions to the community.[12]

Discrimination and Mistreatment

Two of every five workers (39%) answered "yes" when asked if they had been treated differently than others on the job because of being Hispanic or because of being undocumented. Discrimination and mistreatment took many forms.

The employer sanctions part of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 was meant to encourage employers to stop hiring undocumented immigrants. But undocumented people have not been the only ones affected. Studies from all over the country, including the U.S. General Accounting Office, have found a "serious pattern of discrimination" against legal residents who have accents. In other words, IRCA has had the effect of encouraging employers to discriminate in hiring against all Hispanics, whether legal residents or undocumented.

Several immigrants did talk about this pattern. One woman who was legalized through the amnesty program said, "They always believe that I am illegal because I don't know English. I show my card many times for them to see that it is not fake." Several others echoed that feeling. As one woman said: "If you are Mexican, they always think that you are illegal even though you are not." Another amnesty participant explained: "I am not afraid anymore [after receiving amnesty]. But it is harder to get a job. They think everybody is illegal."

But the immigrants interviewed for this study spoke more frequently about discrimination and mistreatment that occurred on the job after they were hired. The most common complaint was humiliation, name-calling and derogatory comments. The remarks below do not include the more obscene comments that were reported by immigrants:

"In the hotel, the 'gringos' always treat you different, and sometimes you feel bad."

"They make fun of me, but I don't know if this is my problem and I feel badly working as a waitress."

"It bothers me that in my job they call me 'taco girl'."

"They call me 'wetback'." [Several]

"My co-workers always make fun of me. They start talking like 'Speedy Gonsales'."

"They say bad things to me but I think it makes them angry because I work harder than other people."

"They make fun of my English. They think I am stupid because I have an accent."

Another complaint voiced by many people was that they were always given the dirtiest and most difficult jobs. It was not simply that the work was hard, but that the burden of work was not shared fairly and people were not treated equally:

"I have to clean more things [than the others] and they take advantage that I have to put up with it and not protest."

"They discriminate against me. They give me the heaviest jobs and the Americans refuse to do them."

"I have to do the work that nobody wants to do."

"You have to work like a horse and the Americans don't."

"[In the place where I work] the Americans do not do their job well and they [the managers] do not say anything to them, but they are very strict with the Mexicans."

"If it is an American who cannot do the work they change that person to an easier job, but when we want something they do not pay attention to us."

"I went to work... and the manager there bothered me a lot. No matter what I did there, whatever the gringos did was always good and whatever I did was always bad."

A few women talked about another kind of discrimination or mistreatment on the job — sexual harassment by supervisors and co-workers. One woman said: "My supervisor invited me to Chicago and told me that I couldn't tell anyone. I didn't like this." Another reported that "there is a man who is always bothering me and calls me on the telephone and tells me to leave my husband."

Some people also had good things to say about the treatment they have received. For example, one woman who had come to Minnesota as a farmworker responded this way when asked about dis-

crimination and mistreatment at work:

"No, it was just the opposite. In the field, he [the employer] even came over and sat down and talked with us. When I got sick at work, the farm owner was the one who took me to the doctor. It turned out that I was pregnant. Then he didn't let me work anymore but he gave more hours to my husband."

Injuries and Medical Attention

One out of every six workers (16%) had been hurt or injured on the job. Work injuries were particularly common and serious among immigrants living outside the metropolitan area, where 22 percent of those now working said they had been injured on the job. The meat-packing and food processing industries had particularly high injury rates.

One woman in meat-packing explained that she works with scissors and knives all day and has gotten many cuts on her hands and fingers, as have many other workers. Pesticide poisoning is another danger in rural Minnesota. Women cleaning offices or hotels or businesses talked about the dangers of strong cleaning solvents.

The dangerousness of the work is compounded by the fact that immediate and high-quality health care has not in some cases been made available to injured workers. As one man, a legal resident who worked in food processing in Greater Minnesota, said:

"You get cut a lot. I have badly cut my fingers twice. One time I cut my finger and they took me to the medical center. I waited two hours. By the time the doctor came, the blood had already dried, but he sewed me up without cleaning it and sent me back to work. Fifteen days later he took out the stitches. Soon after, the cut opened up again because of all the dried blood inside that he had not cleaned out. I had to wash deep inside the wound and I cured myself. I cut myself again at work and I did not go to the doctor since he treated me so badly."

A woman, who was also a legal resident and who had been sprayed with pesticides at a farm where she was applying for work, related this experience:

"I went to the local hospital because of the pesticides and they only gave me some tablets when I should have been admitted to the hospital. They put me out crying, and I said to the nurse that I was dying like an animal. I had to go to a hospital a hundred miles away and there they admitted me and treated me very well. The nurses put cloth with hot water on my skin that was falling off and they put bandages on me every three hours. I am going to return there so they can check on me."

6. The Emotional Side of Immigration

The act of leaving one's homeland, culture and loved ones and trying to live within a strange land and a different culture under hostile laws is bound to be an emotionally wrenching experience. The story of immigration is not merely one of a physical journey, landing a job, finding a place to live or learning a language. It is also very much the story of an emotional journey, of fear and worry, loneliness, separation, and hope. It is not easy to ask precise, easily-measured questions about such experiences. Therefore, we asked general and open-ended questions and let the immigrants do the talking.

Fear

Almost everyone who participated in the study has been deeply afraid. Fear comes in many forms. For some people, there is the fear of losing a job or of running out of food or of being evicted. For some women, there is fear that an abusive ex-husband might find them.

But the most common and powerful fear expressed by the immigrants was fear of "la migra," the immigration authorities. Not everyone admitted to fear. Fifty-four percent of the total sample — and 62 percent of the undocumented immigrants — said they had at some time been afraid of la migra or being deported. (Women were more likely than men to admit fear.) In reality, comments made elsewhere during the interview indicate that almost everyone who is or has been undocumented has at some point experienced this fear.

For many people, the fear is pervasive; it is "always" there. They fear that their dreams will be shattered and that it will be very hard to come back and that all their past sacrifices will be for nothing. They worry about being separated from their children and about violence. We asked people how often and in what types of situations they have felt this fear, and the answers below indicate how immigrants have experienced this emotion.

"I am always afraid, but you learn to live with that." (Woman, Mexico, Undocumented)

"I am afraid all the time. It is something that you do not forget." (Woman, Mexico, Undocumented)

"Yes, I am afraid. It is something that you face day in and day out, that you do not forget." (Woman, Mexico, Undocumented)

"I always have fear because you don't know where they are going to come." (Woman, Mexico, Undocumented)

"Every time I talk on the telephone I wonder if it is being bugged by immigration. I wish that all of immigration would just disappear." (Woman, Mexico, Undocumented)

"Most of the time I am afraid of the migra, for example, when I go to the doctor or to the lake or to the center of the city." (Man, Guatemala, Undocumented)

"I am more afraid for my husband because he works more and if one day the migra would arrive to catch him I do not know what I would do with the children." (Woman, Mexico, Undocumented, two children)

"When one does not have papers, there is this fear. One has it in the shoulders and it is the fear of returning to one's country and one does not have money to come back again." (Woman, Mexico, now has permission to work)

"I have felt fear, for example, when they appear at my work. One time the migra came to get a woman and we all left running." (Woman, Mexico, Undocumented)

"They deported my husband when he went to get a driver's license. They told him that they were waiting and there they grabbed him. I think the same will

Table 9

	Undocumented		Legal		Total	
Have you ever been afraid of the migra or of being deported? — answering "yes"	81	62%	37	43%	118	54%
Have you thought about your status before going to an agency for information or help? — answering "yes"	55	43%	23	27%	78	36%

happen to me." (Woman, Mexico, Undocumented, one child)

"Yes, I have been afraid many times. If I have not died it is because God is so great. I have seen many times when immigration came for people and I was very afraid. (Woman, Mexico, now legal resident)

"I am afraid when I see police cars and whenever someone comes to my door (almost no one comes to visit me) I think they are coming for me." (Woman, Mexico, Undocumented)

"Yes, I am afraid almost all the time. I fear the police a lot." (Woman, Guatemala, Undocumented)

"Yes, I have been afraid that they arrive at my job to see all my documents and they could hurt me and throw me in jail." (Man, Peru, Undocumented)

"I always dream that they detain me and kill me." (Man, Mexico, Undocumented)

Several immigrants expressed the very specific fear that by being caught they might be torn away from their children. This particular anguish, as expressed by the following women, appeared to be stronger than concern for their own individual well-being:

"I dream they catch me and I do not see my children again." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented, two children)

"Sometimes I dream that immigration comes to my house, that they arrest me, and that I do not go back to see my children again." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented, three children)

"Yes, this is something that always worries you. Every night you lose sleep and I pray that God will protect me and every morning when I get up to go to work I thank God for keeping me from immigration and that I am able to see my children." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented, three children)

"Yes, I am afraid all the time. I am afraid that they will take me when I am at work and that I will never be able to see my children again." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented, three children)

The vulnerability of undocumented immigrants is underscored by the fact that some expressed the fear of betrayal by co-workers, landlords, and even family members. The threat of turning someone in can be used to exert power over an undocumented person. Workers, for example, are reluctant to call in sick or complain about working conditions or discrimination because of fear of being turned in, and this fear exists in many other situations. Immigrants expressed fear of betrayal this way:

"There are people who do not have feelings and they could point the finger at those who are here without papers." (Man, Mexico, undocumented)

"I am afraid at work, because one does not know who one is liked by or not." (Man, Peru, undocumented)

"When I fought with my sister-in-law, she threatened me by saying she would throw me to immigration, and now we do not speak to each other." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented)

Fear & the Amnesty Program

The pervasiveness of the fear experienced by undocumented immigrants becomes even clearer when we look at the impact of the amnesty program, which has allowed some undocumented people to obtain legal status. What has changed for those who have received amnesty? Certainly, there are concrete benefits.

Some people said that it was easier to obtain better jobs, although the job picture is mixed because others felt that Mexicans were only hired for low-paying jobs, whether they were legal or not. Some people specifically mentioned being able to file for an income tax refund or get student loans for college or get credit to buy a house. But one gets the strong impression that perhaps the greatest benefit of amnesty has been eliminating the fear and stress of deportation, making it possible for people to feel more relaxed and free. Newly legalized immigrants expressed it this way when asked how their life has changed due to amnesty:

"I am calmer in my house, and my children have security and we are able to come and go without fear."

"It allowed me to get a secure job and without fear of being deported." (Man from El Salvador who now has Temporary Protective Status)

"Now I can work without fear or problems."

"It is better because now we no longer have fear that the migra will catch us, but they do not give you better jobs."

"Now I do not change my name nor am I afraid of immigration."

"I feel surer for everything. I can come and go freely; I feel security and tranquility."

"I am more tranquil and I have more security to look for work, even though I have not obtained any."

"I feel satisfied with myself. I can visit my family in Mexico without problems "

"I feel more confident and free. The fear of being deported has left me." (Man from El Salvador who received Temporary Protective Status)

Fear and Its Effects

Aside from worries that their family may be torn apart and their dreams shattered, fear of being caught and deported sometimes discourages immigrants from taking part in the normal life of the community and exercising basic human rights. Below are actions which some immigrants have felt that they must take to protect themselves:

1. Not reporting crimes to the police. Immigrants who have been robbed and assaulted, including women who have been raped or who have been abused, often are afraid to report these crimes to the police. In some cases, the perpetrator of the crime knows that the victim may feel powerless to call the police.

2. Not talking to their child's teacher or visiting the school to advocate for their child. Communication between parent and teacher is very important, even more so when differences of language and culture make the process of achieving mutual understanding more complicated. Several parents were afraid that immigration might come to the schools or that the schools might contact immigration and have them taken away. One woman, a refugee from Central America, spoke sadly about fearing to intervene on her son's behalf because of her immigration status:

   "The other boys feel they have the right to do bad things to my son. Since I am still not legal, I do not feel like I can fight against this because if I go and say something I believe that they will deport me. I do not feel that I have any rights and I tell him to put up with it."

3. Not seeking medical care when it was needed. As mentioned later, some undocumented people have stayed away from doctor's and clinics for fear of being discovered.

4. Not seeking social services that are vital to their needs. Over one-third of the immigrants (36%) said that there have been times when they have had to think and worry about their immigration status before seeking help from an agency. As a man from Guatemala said, "When one arrives at an office to ask for information, I wonder if they have contact with the migra and before entering there I think about it a lot."

Separation and Loss

The act of immigrating can put enormous strains on family relationships. In some cases, the parents of the person who is immigrating are supportive and encouraging, but in many cases they are opposed to the idea. Even when they are supportive, however, the long separations lead to much sadness and worry. Close to 90 per-

cent of those we interviewed have been able to maintain contact with relatives in their home country, but that is obviously not enough. The situation is complicated by the fact that it is very difficult to travel back and forth. Not only is it costly, but for undocumented people the prospect of finding some way of making the crossing back to the U.S. can be very discouraging.

"My parents did not speak to me for a long time [after I came here]." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented)

"My people miss me a lot and I miss them. There are times when it is hard to send money and I want to do it but I don't know how." (Man, Peru, undocumented)

"My mother cries. She is sad when I say I am not returning." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented)

"My parents don't like it that I am here. They always ask when I am coming home." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented)

"I deceived my parents because I told them that I was going to Acapulco but I came here. My mother cries all the time for me to return." (Man, Mexico, undocumented)

"Coming here has caused problems [with my family] because I am the youngest and we had never been separated and they do not know if I am alive or dead and my son who is in the old country knows nothing about me either." (Woman, fled quickly from her Central American country, undocumented)

"Coming here has caused problems with my family because I already had problems when I left and since I was a woman and came here alone, they got angry. Now, everything is better." (Woman, Mexico, amnesty)

Another source of discouragement for many immigrants is their inability to help their family back home by sending as much money as they had intended. Nearly three-fourths (71%) said they had intended to send money to their families, but only 63 percent of that group have actually been able to send anything at all.

Some of the strongest feelings of loss and anxiety occur when immigrants have had to leave behind one or more of their own children in the home country. As mentioned in Chapter 3, more than one-fourth (28%) of the immigrants who had children under the age of 18 were separated from them. These parents included men who had come to the U.S. to find work while the wife and children remained behind. It also included women who had been separated or abandoned by their husbands or who were escaping abuse and decided to leave one or more of their children with relatives.

Parents separated from their children worried about their health and whether they were being treated well. Some wondered if their children would even know them. They worried what it must be like for the children to be raised by other relatives. One of the strongest dreams of immigrants in this situation is to be re united with their families. The following comments show the range of emotions generated by these separations:

"I worry about them because I am not with them and I do not want them to grow up without their father. This business of coming to the U.S. was supposed to be for a few months. Then I went back home and did not plan to return, but our economic situation was not good and I have come back to the U.S. two times already." (Man, Mexico, undocumented)

"My eight-year old daughter stayed in Mexico alone with my mother for a while and I think she does not forgive me for this." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented)

"Yes, I have cried, because one thinks about one's family. I do not know how my children are. I feel that way almost all the time and at night I don't even sleep. Sometimes I say that I can't put up with this any longer." (Man, three children in Guatemala, undocumented)

"It gives me a lot of sadness to not be able to watch my daughter growing. I do not know if she will get used to me when I bring her to me. I am afraid that she will not understand this and will throw it in my face." (Woman, Mexico, amnesty)

"Yes, it has been a long time since I have seen them. They will not understand why I came but I swear to God that I only wanted it to be better for them and that they would not lack in food." (Woman, Guatemala, amnesty)

"Yes, I worry that they have food,

clothes, schooling — that they have the basic necessities. That is why I am here, far away, to get them a better life." (Man, Mexico, undocumented)

Sadness and Support

Toward the end of the interview, people were asked if they had ever cried here and to whom did they talk when things were bad. A few people felt fortunate that they had not experienced deep sorrow. A man from Mexico said: "I give thanks to God that up until now I have not had any bad experiences." And a woman living in Greater Minnesota explained: "No, I have not cried because I have my family here with me. Just the opposite, I have liked it here because my children are studying." On the other hand, there are those who feel very sad most of the time. For example, a woman replied: "Yes, [I cry] all the time. There are days when I cry for everything. I don't know if I am doing well being here or not." A man put it this way: "I am always sad. I would like to be with my family. When one is alone, one does not eat well." Another woman said: "Yes, I have cried a lot. There are times when I think there are no more tears in my eyes."

The most common reason why people felt deep sadness was separation from their parents, loved ones and perhaps children and their feelings of being alone. One man spoke for many people when he said, "I have cried for my mother and all of my people because it is very hard to be separate from them." Sometimes, this is mixed with nostalgia for one's homeland. An undocumented woman from Panama said: "Sometimes I have cried when I have missed my family and the life back there, which for me is much nicer and prettier than it is here, even with all the needs that a person has there."

Others have felt sadness because life is very hard and sometimes it is hard to see that they are making any progress:

"Yes, sometimes I feel bad because there are many battles that one has to do. Sometimes it is unjust how the poor suffer so much. I ask my little God ("Diosito") to look after my children." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented)

"I have cried a lot. It is very difficult here. There are times when I don't know what to do. I believe that I have sinned a lot and that I am paying for it here." (Woman, Guatemala, undocumented)

"When I arrived here, I felt that I was not going to make it. I thought that I was going to give up and that after all my sacrifices I was going to go back to Mexico in a worse situation than when I left." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented)

"I have cried for the lack of support and for not having money and when I do not have enough food for my children." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented)

"You miss your country and your family, but more than anything else [I am sad for] the humiliation that one receives here." (Woman, Mexico, amnesty)

Many people noted that there was no person who they could really talk to when they felt bad — "[I talk] with no one because I am almost always alone." There is much isolation in the immigrant community and it is not limited to people who are here alone. One woman, for example, told how she had no one to talk to because her husband was always gone working and her daughter was always in school.

Other people are able to speak with their spouses or brothers and sisters or cousins or friends who are here. Several people explicitly mentioned the help they had received from talking with workers in community social service programs. Some people speak to God or to the virgin or the saints — "I talk in church with the virgin. I console myself with her and her with me." For many people, thinking about God or thinking about their families helped them to get through difficult moments. A few people drew strength from their own will and resolve — "I resolve my problems alone, by calming down, so I am able to think about how to resolve them, economically, socially and physically."

Stress and Relationships

Twenty-eight percent of immigrants who were here with their families said that there had been an increase in the level of tension within their families since coming here. Twenty-seven percent of those who were married said their spouse or partner had changed since coming here. Women were three times as likely as men to say that their spouse had changed.

In some cases, the changes in relationships have been for the better. One woman said that her husband no longer hits her as he did in Mexico and another

said he no longer goes with other women. But about eight percent of the women who were interviewed said they had been hit, pushed or threatened in their home since coming to Minnesota. An undocumented woman explained:

"My husband has hit me several times. He never hit me in Mexico, but my brothers were also there and they would defend me. I believe that he took advantage of me because I am here alone [without protection].

Some women have received help from local shelters for battered women. One woman with legal status received help from the police, although most women experiencing abuse have not relied on the legal system:

"The worst experience that I have had here is when my husband hit me and the neighbors called the police. They took him away, but the next day I went to get him. Since that day he hasn't put a hand on me because he knows I'll call the police."

"I worry that they will forget the culture and values. All the education they receive is in English and they don't talk to me sometimes." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented)

"I think that they already do not want to speak Spanish and that they will forget where they come from." (Woman, Mexico, amnesty)

Hope

Despite the difficulties of building a new life here, many immigrants feel that life has indeed become better for them or at least have hope that this will happen. It is very difficult to measure or talk about something like hope. One clue that it exists can be found in the fact that people can articulate the goals and dreams they have for themselves and their families. A few dreams are identified again and again. In no particular order, these are:

- learning English
- getting a better job and earning more money
- becoming a legal resident and/or getting legal papers for one's spouse or children
- seeing their children get a good education and start a good career
- having their own house
- being re-united with parents, spouse, children and other loved ones

It is safe to say, though, that many immigrants have experienced disillusionment with the U.S. Some people came with distorted perceptions of American society. As one man said, "I did not think that it would be so difficult. I thought that all were rich and that there were no poor." Others were surprised at how difficult it was to find good work and at how much discrimination existed. An undocumented woman from Mexico explained it this way:

Table 10: Plan to Return Permanently to Country of Origin?

	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
Yes	64	52%	21	24%	85	41%
No	43	35%	56	64%	99	47%
Don't Know	16	13%	10	12%	26	12%
Total	*123*		*87*		*210*	

Worries About Children

Immigrants who have children here in Minnesota share the same kinds of worries that are often voiced by parents here — drugs and alcohol, AIDS, gangs, getting mixed up with bad friends, being kidnapped or abducted, not finishing school or not doing well in school. But immigrant parents have some additional concerns. They worry that their children, growing up in the U.S., will not understand why their parents left the old country and made this move and will lose touch with Mexican or Latin American culture:

"I think they will never understand why I came and they will ask themselves many questions about their father." (Woman, Mexico, undocumented)

"I worry that they don't want to speak Spanish, that they don't realise what it means to be Mexicans."

"I didn't know that they treated Mexicans so badly here. I thought that gringos treated Mexicans very well. But I believe that in order to understand the U.S. you can only do it by living here as an Hispano. I don't admire the U.S. like I did before living here."

But others immigrants said that they had not become disillusioned or that their original image of the U.S. had not changed or had changed for the better.

"Before, they told us negative things but all is positive. We suffered a lot when we arrived but now we already can relax." (Man, Mexico, legal resident)

"My ideas have changed because here there is a source of employment and I have liked this place. There is not the delinquency, nor the violence, nor the lack of respect for human rights, like in Guatemala." (Man, Guatemala, undocumented)

"Me and my family think that here we are better, that there is a better life for us." (Woman, Mexico, amnesty)

Perhaps one factor that has sustained hope in some measure is that many people have some positive perceptions of Minnesota. When asked what they liked about Minnesota, by far the most frequent responses were that it is "tranquil," "quiet," and "peaceful." Some mentioned the work and educational opportunities, and a few remarked that there did not seem to be as much prejudice as in California and Texas. Several people told of the friendliness and help they had received. A man from Central America told of his bus trip from Minneapolis to Marshall, Minnesota:

"I was going to Marshall and I fell asleep and went to South Dakota. When I asked when we were getting to Marshall, the bus driver laughed at me, but then I came back to Marshall with free bus fare and money that they gave me."

A young woman who had just given birth said, "In the hospital they gave me a baby shower because we had nothing. I have had many problems, but I have met many people who have helped me."

About two of every five (41%) of the immigrants who were interviewed said they planned to return permanently to their country of origin at some point in their lives. Undocumented people were twice as likely as legal immigrants to say they planned to return permanently (52% to 24%). Overall, nearly half of the sample (47%) had no plans for permanent return, although they might go back to visit. One of every eight (12%) who answered the question said they really didn't know what they would do.

7. Basic Necessities and Services

Despite the large number of people who are working, basic needs cannot be taken for granted. Pay is low and working conditions are far from ideal. This chapter looks at access to some of the basic necessities within the immigrant's living environment.

Language

One normally would not think of language skills as one of the basic necessities for survival, at least not in the same way that we think of shelter, food and health care. But for Mexican and Latin American immigrants, adapting to and learning a new language is vital to building a new life here. Just under one-fourth (23%) answered "yes" when asked if they could read English and 26 percent answered "yes" when asked if they could understand English. The rest either answered "no" or "a little." When asked what percent of a conversation in English they thought they could understand, most indicated less than 50 percent.

Spanish is the language in which they also feel most comfortable. More than three of every four (77%) said that they speak only Spanish with the people with whom they live, while another 20 percent spoke both Spanish and English. Learning sometimes happens more quickly among children. More than half of the immigrants with children (57%) said that their children spoke only Spanish with one another, while 35 percent were using both Spanish and English and 8 percent spoke English only.

The desire to learn or improve one's ability to understand English is universal. Ninety-nine percent thought it was important for them to improve their English, and this was true even for those who already have a good command of the language. Only half, however, said they had been able to take any kind of class on English, and some of these classes had not lasted very long. Only 41 percent of undocumented immigrants had been able to take any kind of English class, compared to 63 percent of those with legal status.

The most frequent reason given for not taking classes was lack of time — after working many hours, taking care of children, cooking and so forth, there was not time to take regular classes. A woman living in Minneapolis spoke for many others when she said: "With my children and the job, I have not had enough time." A few people said they had not gone because, in addition to working, they wanted to have more time with their children and were putting that ahead of learning English. A woman from St. Paul explained that she had not yet gone to classes "because I want my daughter to get a little bigger — now she needs me a lot."

Others didn't know where to go, or in particular didn't know where to go for classes that did not cost anything. Trouble getting transportation to the classes or finding child care also made it difficult for many people to go to classes. But a number of people also complained about the classes themselves, particularly about programs in which there were frequent changes in teachers. For example, one woman from St. Paul said, "They are boring and there are different teachers every time and I don't like this," and another woman said, "I don't like their changing teachers every day."

Special Note: The Need for Translators and Interpreters

Ninety-three percent of those interviewed agreed that it'd be better if more places had translators who could speak Spanish. We asked in what kinds of places are translators most necessary. Aside from those who simply answered "everywhere," most people were able to name at least one kind of place. As Table 11 indicates, by far the greatest demand for translators is in medical services — hospitals, clinics and doctor's offices, but especially within

Table 11: In What Type of Places Would You Like There to be Translators?

	Number of People Mentioning
Hospitals, Clinics, Doctor's Offices	94
Supermarkets and Discount Stores	42
Public Offices, esp. the License Bureau	35
Schools, including the university	29
Workplace	27
Job Service and Employment Agencies	25
Courts, Lawyers, Legal Services	22
Telephone Company	14
Post Office	14
Public Utilities — gas, light	13
Banks	12

hospitals. Next frequently mentioned were stores, primarily supermarkets and discount stores like Target and K-mart. Public offices or government offices, most notably the motor vehicle license bureau, received the third highest number of mentions.

Housing

Many immigrants live in large households, often with members of the extended family (their own parents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, cousins) or with other friends who are helping to share expenses. Forty-five percent lived in households of five persons or more, generally in small-to-average size apartments or trailer homes. Over one-fourth of the immigrants (27%) felt that there were too many people living in their apartment. One woman described the impact of crowded conditions this way:

"The tension level has gone up because I do not like living the way we are. I am not into people fighting a lot or listening to the radio. That makes me feel bad." (There are seven people living in a one-bedroom apartment — the woman, her husband, her baby, and four relatives.)

Twenty-two percent of those interviewed had lived in a shelter at some point after their arrival in Minnesota. In fact, twelve of the interviews (6%) were done with people who were currently staying at a shelter for the homeless or a shelter for battered women. Immigrants with legal status were just as likely as undocumented people to have stayed at a shelter.

Food

Well over one third of those interviewed (38%) said that they had experienced hunger in Minnesota. Interviewers believed that some people were reluctant to admit that this was the case, perhaps because it felt shameful to do so. Nearly half (46%) had gotten food from a food shelf at least once in Minnesota. Legal immigrants were slightly more likely to have used a food shelf than undocumented immigrants, although it must be remembered that on the average they have also lived in Minnesota longer. The following table shows some of the ways that people have obtained food:

Went to a food shelf	46%
Went to a soup kitchen	29%
Got food from friends or relatives	22%
Got food at work	7%
Sent children to eat meals with friends or relatives	5%

Health Care

Many immigrants have arrived in Minnesota only recently and have not had illnesses or injuries requiring medical care so far during the time they have been here. Others have simply not gone to the doctor's office when they needed to. Overall, 47 percent have seen a doctor in Minnesota. Twenty-one percent, which represents almost half of all those who have seen a doctor, have gone to an emergency room for treatment at least once. This may be due to difficulties in obtaining routine preventive care or to the severity of workplace injuries or to some other reason. Just under one-third (31%) had seen a dentist in Minnesota.

About one in every four (24%) said they had problems seeing a doctor when they needed to see one. In most cases, the reason given is that medical care is very expensive for them. A woman raising her child alone said: "I almost never go because it is expensive. I pray to God for our health because we can't pay a doctor." A man with a wife and one child said: "I do not have money. You have to heal yourself alone here. I still have not paid them [on a previous visit] and I don't know how I will."

Several people also mentioned their inability to speak English and the lack of

Spanish-speaking staff at some clinics as an obstacle to obtaining health care: "When I have problems with my appointments they always tell me I have to bring someone who can speak English."

For some undocumented people, fear that they might be discovered and deported keeps them away from clinics, hospitals and doctor's offices, even when they need medical care, as illustrated by the following comments:

"Now I no longer go to the doctor even though I feel bad. I only suffer because I know they will ask me for papers." ***(Woman, with Husband and Three Children)***

"Since I am undocumented, I am afraid ***that they will return me to my country."*** ***(Man, here alone)***

"I do not go because at doctor's offices they ask for a lot of information and I do not have a social security number. I am illegal." *(Man, here alone, refugee from Guatemala)*

Outright denial of service due to immigration status has also occurred. An undocumented person gave the following example:

"About a month ago I had pains in my stomach and they would not take care of me at the hospital. They asked me if I had papers and I told them 'no' and they would not see me."

Legal immigrants were much more likely to have received medical care, dental care, and emergency room care than undocumented immigrants, and they were also more likely to report being unable to see a doctor when they really needed to. These differences may be due to the fact that on the average legal immigrants have been here in Minnesota longer, and thus have had more time to accumulate illnesses and injuries needing attention. The figures also show, however, that having legal status provides no guarantee against one of the great dilemmas facing low-income working people in this country — gaining access to medical care.

Transportation

About two of every five immigrants said that they had problems with transportation. Many people cannot afford a car and must either take the bus, rely on rides from friends or relatives, or walk.

Transportation is essential for getting to jobs or to make applications for work. Some people are keenly aware that lack of adequate transportation limits their opportunities for better jobs. As one man from St. Paul said: "There aren't many buses in the suburbs. There are many good jobs but I am not able to go to them because I don't have transportation." A woman living in Minneapolis added: "I know there are better jobs but you can't go because you need a car because there are no buses." This is also true for people in cities who have or want to have jobs with unusual hours.

The absence of public transportation in small towns outside the Twin Cities and long waits between buses on some city routes were also mentioned by several people. Difficulty in reading schedules and asking directions was experienced by those who could not understand English, particularly in their first few months here. A man from Panama who is here alone said that, "buses are hard for me because I do not understand the schedule and if one bus passes there is a long wait for the next one — what happens is that one arrives at work late and they discount you for that hour."

Some people simply don't have enough money even for bus fare. "When I want to go someplace either to look for work or just to go there," said a man from Guatemala, "I have to do it walking."

School

Nearly all of the immigrants with school-age children had their children enrolled in school. However, for many parents this was only done with some fear and hesitancy. Thirty-nine percent of the parents — and 53 percent of the undocumented parents — answered "yes" when asked if they had been afraid to send their children to school.

Language is one of the difficulties that makes some people nervous about school. An undocumented woman from Mexico said, "I do not understand anything and there are not people who can explain to me in Spanish how my daughter is doing."

Another common fear is that the children might be mistreated or insulted or harassed by other students. Incidents such as these are bound to have some effect on how comfortable students feel in school. Among the experiences related by

these parents were the following:

"They tease them because they eat tacos and they say the 'taco girls' or the 'refried bean girls'."

"The children here do not understand or respect the children from other places."

"They make fun of them. At times the children are very sad and they cry."

"They say a lot of things to them. Before, they made fun of them because they didn't speak English and now they make fun because they speak two languages."

"Some used to treat them very badly, calling them 'chicanitos' or 'Mexicanitos mojados' but not any more."

Finally, one in every four parents — and one of every two undocumented parents — said they had been afraid to send their children to school because of their immigration status. Several parents described their reluctance to talk with teachers or intervene on their child's behalf because of fear they might be discovered and deported.

8. Recommendations

These recommendations are drawn from the experiences of new Hispanic immigrants and from interviews with community leaders and service providers. We asked immigrants what actions or services would most improve their lives here in Minnesota. Service providers and community leaders were asked similar questions, as well as what their dreams would be for these people. Their dreams stretched from taking on the INS and the whole immigration system to providing appropriate food for them at food shelves and drop in centers. Finally, the steering committee had many long discussions as to what outcomes we would like to see from the project.

In 1985 Mayor Koch of New York City argued that undocumented people should not be discouraged from making use of those city services to which they are entitled; on the contrary, for the public well-being, they should be encouraged to do so. He wrote:

> *"For the most part, these... [undocumented people] are self-supporting, law abiding residents. The greatest problem that they pose to the city is their tendency to under use services to which they are entitled and on which their well being and the city's well-being depend. For example, victims of crime, consumer fraud or workplace safety violations may decide not to report their victimization for fear that their presence in the city will come to the attention of immigration authorities. Persons who need medical care may decide not to seek it, some families may keep their children out of school, and adults may fail to avail themselves of ESL classes for the very same reason. It is to the disadvantage of all who live in the City if some of its residents are uneducated, inadequately protected from crime, or untreated for illness. This is true regardless of one's views on the propriety of unauthorized immigration."*

The same barriers and realities which exist for people of color and low income people in general need to be addressed for immigrants as well. However, it is our intention in the recommendations below to focus on the special interests of new immigrants and not on the general public policy needs the people of color and low-income people. We have five basic recommendations:

1. Reducing fear
2. information sharing to community
3. challenge of Language: ESL programs and interpreters
4. new and expanded services
5. re-evaluation of immigration law and employer sanctions

1. Reducing Fear & Creating Safe Environments

Currently the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is the agency mandated to control immigration. No individual or organization or state or local government is required to report undocumented immigrants except when they undertake illegal activities.

State, county and city governments in Minnesota should not spend time and resources tracking down and reporting immigrants to the INS. That is not their job. Instead, units of government can create safe environments in which immigrants would feel free to seek information, report crimes, obtain a driver's license, see a doctor and participate in the life of the community. They can do this by passing an ordinance or legislation that explicitly directs agencies not to endanger the safety of undocumented immigrants unless that person is engaged in criminal or fraudulent activity.

Saint Paul, like several other cities, has an ordinance which applies only to Central American political refugees. We believe that, to be effective, such ordinances should be extended to cover all undocumented immigrants.

Certain offices have become known as places where there is real danger of being picked up by the INS. The Motor Vehicle

Bureau is one of those places. Once local ordinances or state legislation is passed, these offices should make an extra effort to publicize their new policies.

2. Information Policy and Information Sharing

Government agencies, service providing agencies and private organizations ought to re-evaluate the kind of information they require before providing services and ought to receive training on how to be more sensitive to immigrant clients.

La Clinica, a medical service for Hispanics in St. Paul describes their philosophy: "It is a barrier to ask people about their immigration status. All we really need to know is the age roughly, the sex, the ethnic background, an address and phone number so that we can contact them."

There is no need for schools to ask about immigration status, particularly when the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that undocumented children have the right to public education. There is no need for Minnesota's innovative Children's Health Plan, which provides outpatient health care for the children of the working poor, to ask for Social Security numbers. Such actions reinforce the fear and discomfort that people feel about talking with teachers, going to the doctor's office or seeking other kinds of help. Asking for citizenship papers, social security numbers, and other kinds of intrusive or threatening data should be abandoned unless absolutely necessary.

While the system re-examines itself, the community also needs further information about their rights and responsibilities. Some immigrants are aware of the laws in MN, but often people do not know about their rights as employees (workers compensation, minimum wage, safety regulations, etc.), students or tenants.

Table 12: What Would Most Help You Improve Your Life in Minnesota? (percent answering yes to each item)

	Undocumented		Legalized		Total	
Classes or programs to help me learn English	95	73%	59	66%	154	70%
Finding a job or a better job	94	72%	55	62%	149	68%
Help with immigration law	97	74%	42	47%	139	63%
Housing — finding a better place to live	63	48%	35	39%	98	45%
General legal help	57	44%	34	38%	91	41%
Getting training for a better job	48	37%	39	44%	87	40%
Getting medical care	48	37%	31	35%	79	36%
Help with transportation	39	30%	22	25%	61	28%
Help getting into college	33	25%	27	30%	60	27%
Food	41	31%	15	17%	56	26%
Help paying utility bills	25	19%	27	30%	52	24%
Child care	26	20%	17	19%	43	20%
Clothing	23	18%	15	17%	38	17%
Finding things for children to do	13	10%	19	21%	32	15%
Help with alcohol or drug problems	13	10%	9	10%	22	10%
Help with family planning	14	11%	7	8%	21	10%
Finding a women's shelter	2	2%	1	1%	3	1%

Three strategies that should be considered are:

- putting up signs in buses or other public places in Spanish with information about people's rights and where to call for further assistance. These could include phone numbers for human rights and tenants hotlines.
- training of community service advocates who can do small group presentations to immigrants in homes or other environments that people trust. These advocates can be volunteers who are from the community and who can themselves be trained and empowered to help themselves and others. We began to do some of this at the end of our research and found great interest in the community presentations.
- preparing booklets that provide a clear summary of immigration law.

3. Language and Interpreters

Three things are on the minds of most Hispanic immigrants as they try to improve their lives here: learning English; finding a job or a better job; becoming legal residents or helping other family members become legal residents. This is an oversimplification, of course, but these are clearly the concerns mentioned most often when immigrants were asked to indicate what activities or services would improve their lives in Minnesota. (See Table 12.)

Over two-thirds (70%) of the immigrants indicated an interest in classes or programs to improve their English. The challenge of language is one of the areas of greatest difficulty for new immigrants in Minnesota. Whereas in Texas and other states people can often live in monolingual Spanish speaking communities with little need to know English, the same cannot be said for Minnesota. Interpreters as well as English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are two ways to bridge the language gap.

The more that people can learn English, the less they will need interpreters. Barriers to participating in English classes ought to be investigated and removed. These include: "lack of time, money and transportation," and "because there is no one to take care of the children." In addition, some programs require social security numbers and information on immigration status, and that can be intimidating. In addition people requested certain specifics: more stability in teaching assignments, so they are not seeing new teachers all the time; classes in the morning and afternoon and at various times to accommodate changing work schedules; and classes at more than a beginning level.

Interpreters should be trained and hired throughout Minnesota's government and social service network,[13] with special attention to the areas identified by immigrants in Table 11. In many cases now, immigrants must bring their own interpreters, which limits their access to service. In some areas, the quality and skills of the interpreter are very important. Training programs that would certify the skills of interpreters in specialized areas such as medical and court interpretation are urgently needed. Another model which could be investigated in Minnesota is one which currently exists in Queens, New York, where at any hospital in which at least 5 percent of the clients speak a foreign language, an interpreter is provided at the hospital 24 hours a day.

4. New Services & Expanded Services

Over two-thirds of the immigrants wanted to find a job or a better job; while the great majority of immigrants interviewed for this study were already working, pay was low and there was an eagerness to find better pay and conditions.

New approaches ought to be developed to create work opportunities for undocumented immigrants, who generally cannot obtain access to regular job training programs. Cooperatives and self-employment are possible avenues. In other parts of the country churches have become very involved in the development of housecleaning cooperatives. Small seed funds so that people can start up their own businesses are also needed. In some cases people have already begun to so, such as the mechanic we interviewed who works out of his home garage. Some immigrants have run their own businesses in their home countries.

Another very high priority for immigrants was immigration law. Nearly two-thirds (63%) wanted help with immigra-

tion law. Among undocumented immigrants, 74 percent wanted help. (Table 12) The problem of jobs and legal papers are frequently intertwined. One man said: "I would like to have my papers to be able to find jobs anywhere — in hotels, restaurants or my profession, to be working legally with everything in order." Another person expressed a very common thought this way: "Looking for work is my main effort and my greatest problem is that I don't have papers." It is striking that almost half of those with legal status also wanted help with immigration law. This is most likely due to the various hurdles that amnesty participants must still undergo before their temporary permission is upgraded to permanent residency status, but also because many legal immigrants have spouses and children who are not documented.

Help with immigration law is especially important in rural Minnesota, where little access to legal services exists and where legal services often have no Spanish-speaking capability.

Another very clear need, which flows more from the results of the whole study than from the question asked in Table 12, is for counseling and support. Studies done of Central Americans living in California document that many are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Although their situation is specific to the violence in their home countries, the pain of separation, the fear, the stress and the cultural adjustment which many immigrants undergo needs outlets, and for the most parts those outlets do not exist.

Agencies in Minnesota report similar patterns. Staff at La Clinica find that mental problems is one of the primary diagnoses. "People may come to the clinic for a cut or an infection, but then the other diagnoses come out." Or as another service provider describing the needs of new Hispanic immigrants said: "work, food, housing, drugs, but more than anything else, people with whom to speak with, people who will listen to them."

To address some of these emotional needs and crisis, a combination approach would be ideal. Because of cultural values, professional therapy and the like is seen as only for crazy people. This cultural barrier impedes many from seeking services. However, that could be overcome if the listener could be deemed to be non-threatening and just a friend, a peer counselor. Therefore our three ways of meeting this ever-growing and barely discussed need are:

- support groups, some of which are already in existence;
- training of para-professionals — community members who could be trained as listeners and advocates, and who through the training may also help themselves and others immediately around them;
- the existence of bilingual counselors and counseling programs. There is a woeful shortage of programs in Minnesota to serve many of the counseling needs of immigrants, especially women.

5. Reform of Immigration Law

Finally since many of these problems stem from federal immigration law, we hope that this report will provide one more voice to the national debate on immigration policy.

First, the "employer sanctions" provision of federal immigration law should be repealed. Employer sanctions have failed to deter unauthorized immigration and have led to widespread job discrimination against Hispanics, Asians, and others with "foreign" appearance or accent, regardless of whether they are here legally or not.[14]

Second, immigration law is biased against immigrants from Mexico and Latin America. Most of the people who want to come to the U.S. are from these countries, but the law doesn't take that into account. Thus, quotas are sufficiently high to allow most Europeans who wish to immigrate to do so, but they force hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and Latin Americans to enter illegally. Federal immigration policy should be changed to eliminate this bias. Mexicans and Latin Americans should have just as much chance to immigrate legally as residents of any other country.

Notes

1. For example, the Immigration Act of 1990 grants "employer-sponsored" immigration visas to 140,000 people per year. Nearly all of these visas are reserved for skilled workers, managers, executives, professionals and researchers. In addition, 10,000 immigration visas are reserved each year for wealthy non-residents who are willing to invest at least one million dollars in American businesses. See "Major Immigration Bill Is Sent to Bush," *New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1990, and "Immigration Bill Would Expand Access to U.S., Easing Entry for Skilled Professionals, Investors," *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 15, 1990.

2. U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *1989 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), p. 46.

3. Vernon Briggs, "Methods of Analysis of Illegal Immigration into the United States," *International Migration Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1984): 623-641.

4. Jeffrey Passel and Karen Woodrow, "Geographical Distribution of Undocumented Immigrants: Estimates of Undocumented Aliens Counted in the 1980 Census by State," *International Migration Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1984): 642-671.

5. Jeffrey Passel and Karen Woodrow, "Change in the Undocumented Alien Population in the United States, 1979-1983," *International Migration Review*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1987): 1304-1334.

6. D.G. Papademetriou, "The U.S. Legalization Program: A Preliminary Final Report" *International Migration*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1989): 5-23.

7. Figures for Minnesota were obtained during an interview at the INS office in Bloomington, Minnesota on February 12, 1991.

8. This study was loosely modeled after an excellent study published by the Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Services (CIRRS) in San Francisco in 1991. CIRRS's report, *Dreams Lost, Dreams Found: Undocumented Women in The Land of Opportunity*, was based on interviews with undocumented Latina, Filipina and Chinese women. Many of the interviewers were themselves undocumented.

9. Frank D. Bean, Barry Edmonston and Jeffrey Passel (eds.), *Undocumented Migration to the United States: IRCA and the Experience of the 1980's* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 1990).

10. Tom Barry (ed.), *Mexico: A Country Guide* (Albuquerque, N.M.: Inter-Hemispheric Education and Resource Center, 1992), pp. 95-98. See also David Brooks, "Mexico: Whose Crisis, Whose Future," in *NACLA Report of the Americas*, Vol. 21, No. 5-6 (1987): 13-39.

11. Minnesota Department of Revenue, *Tax Incidence Study*, 1991.

12. Other useful research studies of the work experiences of Hispanic immigrants include the following:

    Leo R. Chavez, Estevan T. Flores and Marta Lopez-Garza, "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?: Undocumented Settlers and Immigration Reform," *Human Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (1990): 193-205;

    Estevan T. Flores, "Research on Undocumented Immigrants and Public Policy: A Study of the Texas School Case," *International Migration Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1984): 505-523;

    Nestor P. Rodriguez, "Undocumented Central Americans in Houston: Diverse Populations," *International Migration Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1987): 4-26;

    Rita J. Simon and Margo DeLey, "The Work Experience of Undocumented Mexican Women Migrants in Los Angeles," *International Migration Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1984): 1212-1229.

13. For additional information, see the *Report of the Task Force on Interpretive Services*, which was presented to the Hennepin County Board in February, 1992. The report is available from the Hennepin County Office of Planning and Development.

14. See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Immigration Reform: Employer Sanctions and the Question of Discrimination* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990). The GAO found that 19 percent of employers surveyed around the country admitted to discriminatory practices based on national origins or citizenship status. Fourteen percent reported that, after employer sanctions went into effect, they began to hire only U.S.-born persons or they refused to hire persons with temporary work authorizations. A hiring audit included in the GAO report found that Anglo job applicants were three times more likely than their equally qualified Latino partners to receive favorable treatment from employers.

Several advocacy and community organizations have also done studies showing that employer sanctions are leading to discrimination against legal residents who look "foreign" or speak with a foreign accent. Especially useful are:

Employment and Hiring Practices Under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986: A Survey of San Francisco Businesses, published by the San Francisco-based Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Services in 1989;

Tarnishing the Golden Door: A Report on Widespread Discrimination Against Immigrants and Persons Perceived as Immigrants Which Has Resulted from the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, published by the City of New York Commission on Human Rights in 1989;

The Human Costs of Employer Sanctions: Recommendations for GAO's Third Report to Congress Under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, published by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund in 1989; and

Employer Sanctions — A Costly Experiment, published by the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles in 1990.

(For more information about these and other reports, contact the Urban Coalition.)

Appendix A: The Lives of Children

Thirty-eight immigrant children were also interviewed to learn more about their perspectives. The children were asked different questions than the adults and the interviews were more informal and unstructured. The children ranged in age from 5 to 18 years old. Over two-thirds of the interviews were done in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area; the rest were done in Greater Minnesota. Nearly all (35) were originally from Mexico. This appendix reports very briefly and selectively on their responses.

Dreams

Children were asked to talk about their dreams and wishes. Not surprisingly, the most common theme — mentioned by 22 of the children — was having more money, having "lots of money," or being rich. As one child put it more elegantly: "I dream that my family never lacks in anything." A twelve year old girl from Mexico said she wanted a lot of money not only to help her family but also "to help the children of El Salvador."

The next most common wish, cited by over one-third (13) of the children, was to return or travel to their home country. Typically, children stated simply that they wanted "to go to Mexico." A ten year old girl said, "I dream that we buy two plane tickets so that we would return to Mexico — or if not by plane, then on the bus." Young children are often seen as very flexible and adaptive. However, it is clear that many of these children are feeling the strain and loss of moving away from their familiar culture and homeland to this very different land.

Other dreams and wishes frequently mentioned by children included:

- that their family would have their own house (11);
- that other family members, such as mothers, sisters, grandparents, who were still in the home country would be able to come to the U.S. and live with them (10);
- that they would be able to learn English (8).

Several children wished that their mothers would not cry so much or that their mothers would be happy. Among the "dreams" of an 11 year-old girl were "that my mother not cry, that my father not yell so much, that my grandmother would be here with us, and that I would grow fast, very fast." The strain felt by that child is very evident. A few children talked about death, specifically about the hope that they and their family would never die. A small number of girls responded that they wanted to be "very pretty" or beautiful.

Likes and Dislikes About Minnesota

During the interview, children were asked about what they liked and did not like about Minnesota. As might be expected, many children did not like the climate — specifically the cold winters. As one 14 year-old said: "I do not like that it is very cold and I cannot go out." But that feeling was not shared by everyone. Quite a few children said that they liked the snow.

Stores, clothes and parks were frequently mentioned by children as things which they liked about Minnesota: "I like the stores and looking in the stores." Some children talked about adequate food and modern conveniences. A 13 year-old boy said that "here there is a lot of food and in my house there is water — a lot of it." This was not the case in his home country. In Mexico, he said, "I had to heat the water to bathe myself; here it comes by itself into the bathtub." A few children said there was more help here than in their home country for people who need food or shelter.

One of the dislikes expressed by children was that very few Americans know Spanish and the children feel that "no one understands me." Some were upset by racial attitudes they have encountered. An 18 year old said one of the things she did not like was "people who think badly of other races."

One hopeful sign was that positive feelings about school strongly outweighed negative feelings. Fourteen of the chil-

dren specifically mentioned schools as one of the things they liked about Minnesota. A 13 year-old said: "The schools are big and beautiful and they have everything, many materials." An 18 year-old said: "I like the high schools and the opportunities they give to people who come from other countries." Only three of the children explicitly named schools as one of the things they did not like, although it is clear that these negative feelings were held very strongly by this small group. One 14 year-old said that "in the school they discriminate against Mexicans; it feels ugly." Another said she did not like school even though the schools have everything. For another, "everything seems lousy" about her school and teachers.

Hiding

Undocumented people and families with one or more undocumented members sometimes have to keep their true selves hidden and secret. That is also true for children. Nearly half the children who were interviewed said they have had to change their names or make up stories about who they were.

"My mother has changed her name, and she tells me that I should not call her by her name when there are other people around."

"When we came, my mother told me never to tell my real name."

"La migra got us and when they asked our names my sister gave a different name and so did I."

"Well, at times I had to say that I was not the daughter of my mother. I had to say that my mother was my aunt."

"Yes [we have done that] so that nothing happens to us. My mother says that we should not talk to anyone and that we should never tell the truth."

"Yes [we gave false names] in Tijuana to the coyotes so that if la migra got them they wouldn't know who I am."

A couple of the older teenagers said they had lied about their age and had used a different name in order to get a job.

Living this way has not been easy for many children. Most of the children who have had to make up stories and use false names said they felt bad about doing it. An 11 year-old said: "You are better off in your own country. You come to live here and you have to pass in hiding or with a different name. That is bad." Another child said that "it is not good because before coming here my mother told me not to tell lies and when we came she told me to tell them." But other children have accepted the necessity for doing this and did not feel badly. "If I had not changed my name," said an 18 year-old matter-of-factly, "I would not be here now." Another child said it was fine to use another name so she would be "able to pass and so that they do not put me in jail."